the weekly Standard

SEPTEMBER 18, 2000 • $3.95

WHAT'S UP, DOC?
PETER E. DANS

HOW BUSH CAN WIN

WILLIAM KRISTOL
Run as a conservative

FRED BARNES
Recapture the moral issue

NOEMIE EMERY
Show strength

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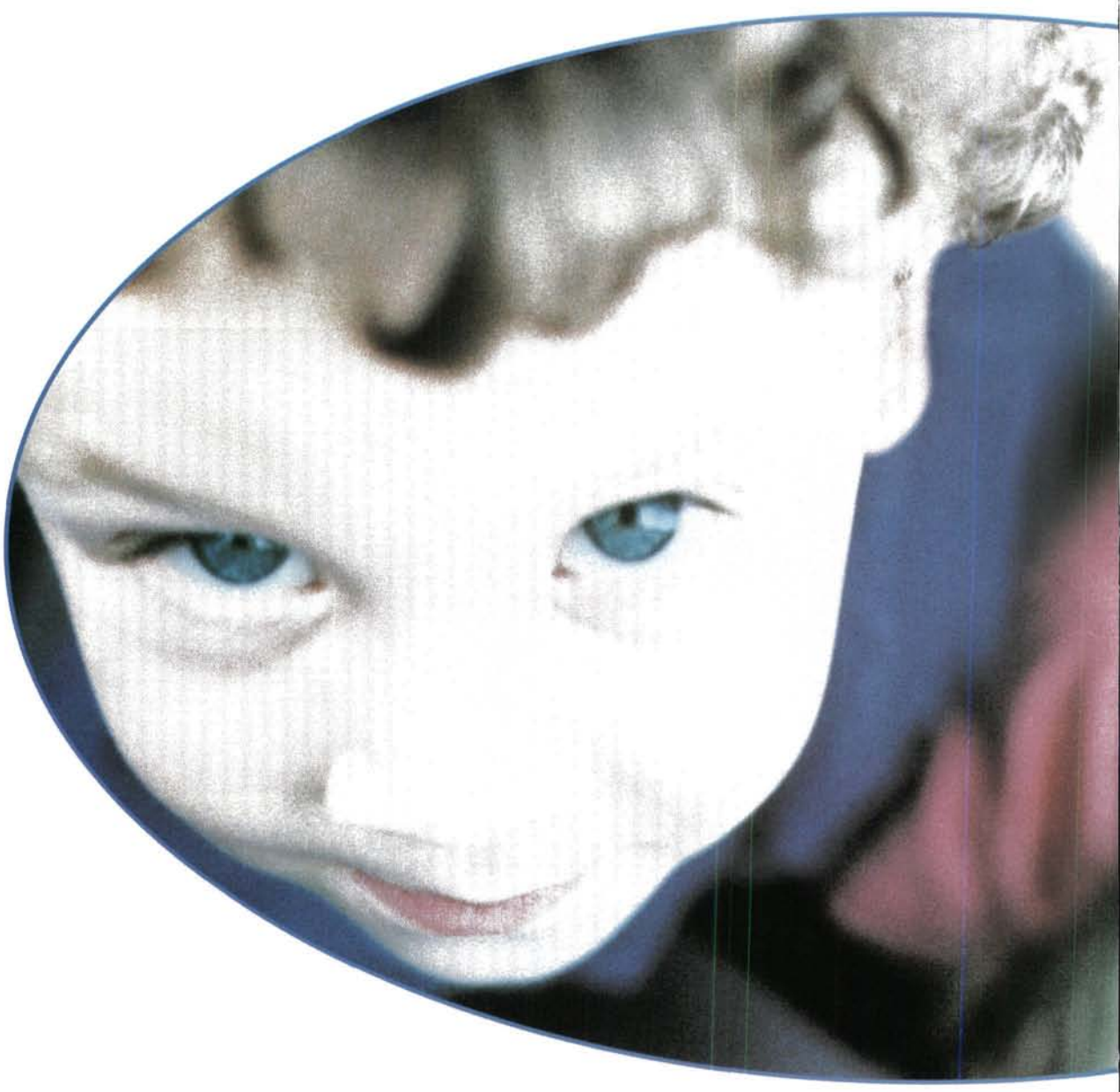

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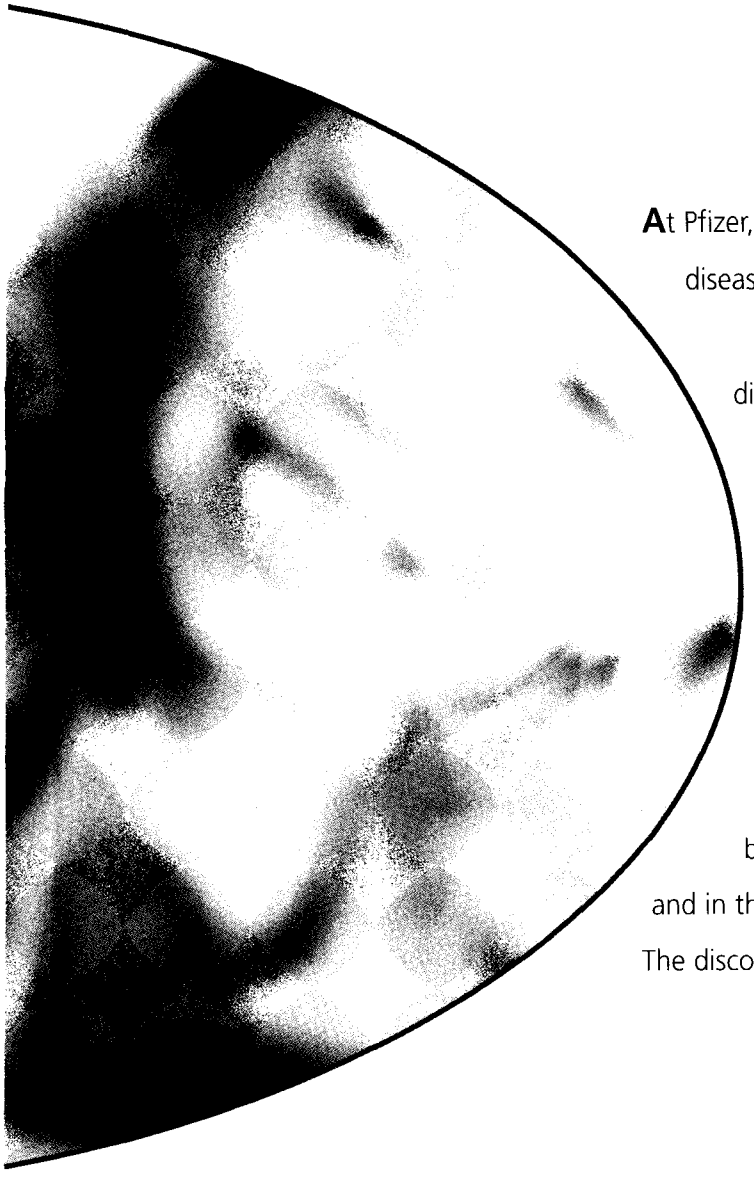

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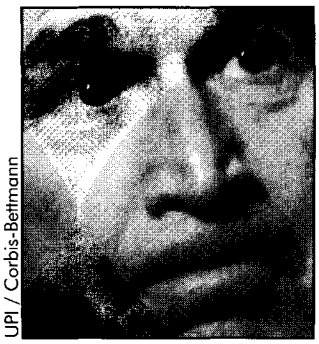

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the weekly Standard

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George W., Speaking Truth To Power

Even in Washington, this city of strivers, fame often arrives unbidden, and so it descended early last week on Adam Clymer, a long-serving and otherwise not particularly notable reporter in the capital bureau of the *New York Times*. Thanks to the plain speaking of George W. Bush, Clymer is now known to the world—or to that portion of the world that follows politics—as an asshole.

How this particular cat was let out of the bag is by now a well-known story. Taking the stage at a political rally with his running mate, Bush spotted Clymer in the crowd—he is usually hard to miss—and leaned over to Dick Cheney. "There's Adam Clymer," said Bush, unaware that he could be heard through an open microphone, "a major-league asshole from the *New York Times*." To which Cheney replied, "Yeah, he is, big time." Cheney was doing more than fulfilling the vice president's traditional role as yes man to the boss. For no sooner was Bush's insight shown on TV than Internet websites and other news sources began filling with evidence that Bush was right, big time.

For starters, as the Media Research Center and others pointed out, Clymer is the author of several recent particularly tendentious *Times* stories about the Bush campaign. One "news analysis" credited a Bush TV ad with "zero accuracy." Here's the lede of another story from April: "Texas has had one of the nation's worst public health records for decades. More than a quarter of its residents have no health insurance [etc.]. But since George W. Bush became governor in 1995, he has not made health a priority, his aides acknowledge." That lovely little "his aides acknowledge" is, in our opinion, what lifts most Clymer stories from the level of typical *Times* agitprop to the work of a genuine—major-league, if you will—asshole: It is a disdainful, almost mocking nod toward the conventions of objectivity, and a Clymer trademark.

Of course, he sometimes forgoes even the patina of objectivity. *Investor's Business Daily*, for example, reported that at a recent meeting of the American Political Science Association, Clymer referred to the House Republican class of 1994 as "those turkeys who got elected in the '94 Gingrich sweep." He also offered this sweet aside about Rep. Phil Crane, who is being treated for alcoholism: "I've heard that Crane has finally dried out." And let us not forget Clymer's magnum opus, an unintentionally amusing biography of Ted Kennedy which, at 600-plus unreadable pages, is almost as oversized as the senator himself. In his book Clymer skates as it were over the signal event of Kennedy's life—you may remember Chappaquiddick, something about a car and a pond and a girl—to deliver such stunningly ignorant and ahistorical verdicts as this: Kennedy "deserves recognition not just as the leading senator of his time but also as one of the greats in the history of this singular institution, wise in its workings, especially its demand that a senator be more than partisan to accomplish much."

"More than partisan": What a charming ambition. Too bad it hasn't seemed to touch the work of Clymer. But how pleasant to think that he has finally, thanks to Governor Bush, achieved the fame he deserves. ♦

Don't Knock Unz

In 1998, Silicon Valley businessman Ron Unz wrote California's Proposition 227 and almost single-handedly planned and financed the campaign that got it passed. Unz's winning initiative effectively abolished the state's bilingual education programs in favor of a cold-turkey "English immersion" curriculum. Naturally enough, California's public school bureaucracy, the national education "community," and the Clinton administration were horrified—and went immediately to war in court. If the state's Spanish-speaking students were no longer taught in their native tongue, the president warned, they would be condemned to "intellectual purgatory" for the rest of their lives.

Which is exactly where they already were, as it happens. For nigh unto 30 years, millions of California's immigrant schoolchildren had been granted the "helping gift" of all-day bilingual education. Consequently, appallingly few of them ever learned to speak English—or do math or science or much of anything else. Apparently, Unz's opponents thought Proposition 227 would actually make things *worse*.

How might that be possible, one wonders? Answer: It mightn't. Last month, two years after legal challenges were finally dismissed and Unz's law went into effect, the first comprehensive standardized test results were released. The numbers are staggeringly good, across the board. Spanish-speaking students' English language scores, for example, are up more than 50 percent at a number of different grade levels. Ron Unz deserves a Nobel Prize. He has *rescued* these kids.

A handful of California educators have warmly welcomed this success, honorably congratulated Unz, and freely acknowledged the error of their past objections. But from Bill Clinton: silence. And from Al Gore? The meticulously crafted campaign platform he's now running on explicitly denounces English-only education policies and

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promises permanent support for bilingual education. Bush, who has at times equated compassionate conservatism with coddling his state's bilingual-ed establishment, has of late been prudently silent on the subject. The people are now well ahead of their leaders on this subject. For the sake of all the Spanish-speaking kids outside California, let's hope the political class quickly catches up. ♦

Isikoff's Vindication

In the summer of 1998, Julie Hiatt Steele—remember her?—filed a federal punitive damages claim against Michael Isikoff, the *Newsweek* reporter justly honored for his Lewinsky scandal scoops. Steele's logic was truly bizarre. To summarize:

Steele contended that Isikoff had done something terribly wrong to her by explaining in print and on television how she'd lied to him about Clinton groping-victim Kathleen Willey. Yes, Steele freely admitted the lies in question. But she claimed her falsehoods had been delivered "off the record" (which Isikoff convincingly denied). And she further claimed that it was an actionable tort—many actionable torts, in fact—for Isikoff, after he discovered her truthlessness, to have withdrawn from Steele his alleged promise that her name would stay a secret.

In other words, according to Steele: One has a legally enforceable right to deliver anonymous misinformation to a journalist. Alice in Wonderland stuff, this was.

Last Wednesday, Steele's nuisance suit against Isikoff was summarily dismissed. In a coolly brutal 25-page opinion, U.S. district judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly threw out all 11 charges Steele had brought—as legally groundless. Whatever harm had befallen her, the judge concluded, Steele had caused herself. Her lies to *Newsweek* were "the epitome of bad faith."

Which result isn't surprising, of course. The real curiosity is this: Steele's ludicrous litigation, all along publicly applauded by the president's defenders, lasted more than two full years. She's not a wealthy woman. Who paid for her lawyers? ♦

Remember Vice President Scrooge?

The Scrapbook considers it an appalling invasion of privacy, not to mention an invitation to the worst sort of Tartuffery, that we require our political leaders to disclose their charitable giving in their tax forms. But given that we do, last week's anti-Cheney frenzy in the press was amazingly one-sided. In our Nexis search, only four of the 162 stories we turned up mentioned the Gores' embarrassing 1997 tax returns, which showed a total of $353 in giving from an income of almost $200,000. Like the Gores, the Cheneys will no doubt ratchet up their giving next year to achieve a respectable overall percentage. But will this actually be charity, or the result of a very public shakedown? And still reporters wonder why politicians call them names. ♦

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Casual

You Got Attitude?

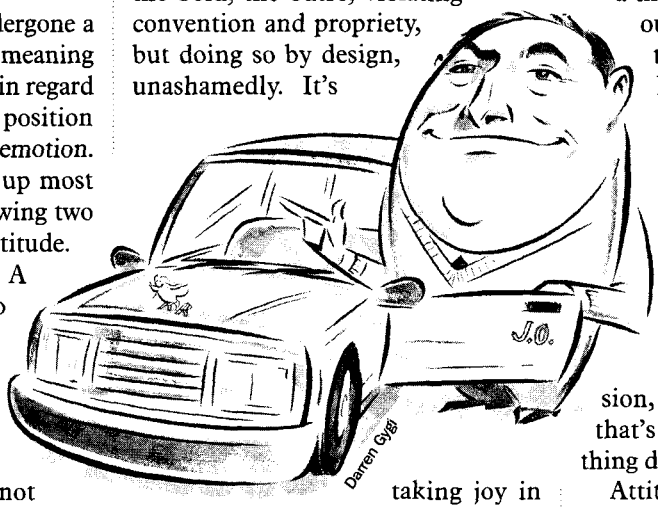
I don't believe I have attitude, but I do own at least one bow tie that does. Some readers will wonder if that sentence isn't missing an indefinite article. Shouldn't it be "an attitude"? For anyone who feels the want of that indefinite article, I can only say, in the mortal words of Mr. T., from the old television show *The A-Team*, "I pity the fool." Mr. T., in his mohawk haircut, his ample, well-defined muscles festooned in gold, had attitude in sweet excelsis.

The word attitude has undergone a big change. The word's core meaning used to be "a mental position in regard to a fact or state," with that position often charged with feeling or emotion. The word probably showed up most frequently in one of the following two sentences: She has a good attitude. And: I don't like his attitude. A certain malleability was also implicit in the old meaning of the word, the assumption being that one could alter, change, perhaps completely reverse one's attitude. Only human beings—certainly not inanimate objects—had attitudes.

No longer. "The most important thing today," says the designer Stefano Gabbana, "is attitude." In *Harper's Bazaar*, the blurb for a piece called "Party Favor" reads: "What does it take to pose as the latest girl? An invitation, some attitude, and two gutsy dresses." At a Texas Rangers-Chicago White Sox game in early August, a fan held up a sign reading, "Attitude Is Everything."

That is the problem: Semantically, the word is all over the place, popping up everywhere and meaning everything. No two people seem to agree on its meaning, or at any rate on its new meaning. "Wonks with attitude are scarier than the rich," runs a sentence in an op-ed piece in the *New York Times*. In *Wired*, a new basketball shoe is said to turn "on-court attitude into courtside casual." In Mark Gauvreau Judge's book *If It Ain't Got That Swing*, "the beboppers had attitude." What can all this mean? How should I know? English is only my first language.

Does Michael Jordan have attitude? Do the pro football players Brett Favre and Warren Sapp? I suspect all three do. In its new meaning, attitude is perhaps the reverse of understated. It's the bold, the outré, violating convention and propriety, but doing so by design, unashamedly. It's taking joy in outrageousness. It's calling attention to yourself: Yo, look at me. It's in-your-face arrogance, deliberately unchecked, but arrogance in a (somehow) winning form.



That objects—cars, clothes, shoes, wristwatches—can have attitude is a help in locating the word in its new meaning. The novelist John O'Hara promised himself he would buy a Rolls-Royce if he won the Nobel Prize. When it became clear he wasn't going to win it, he bought the car anyway, a four-door Silver Cloud III, dark green, with his initials on the driver's-side door. A few of his wealthy friends owned the more understated but not much less expensive Bentley, but O'Hara decided: "None of your shy, thumb-sucking Bentley radiators for me. I got that broad in her nightgown on my radiator and them two R's, which don't mean rock 'n' roll." That, I do believe, is attitude.

One can of course bemoan the sloppiness of standards that allows a long-established word suddenly to take on a new meaning. Yet in doing so one is engaged in an enterprise likely to be as effective as delivering a sermon on the need for more temperate behavior to a flood. By its nature, language, as in the Paul Simon song, has this tendency to go slip-sliding away. The questions to ask when a new word enters the language, or an old one is radically changed, are why? why now? and who needs this?

The current meaning of attitude is useful in denoting a new, in most cases rather mild, sort of non-conformity at a time when it isn't so easy to step out of all the ready-made patterns of custom and style. Niche-conformity, another new phrase, implies that all groups, no matter how ostensibly far out, have their own strict rules. And so they would seem to have. One passes a green-haired, heavily tattooed, multiply pierced youth in the street and, after a brief wave of revulsion, yawns. That's not attitude—that's merely conformity to something deeply repulsive.

Attitude is my Jelly-Belly red and white, unevenly polka-dotted, giant butterfly bow tie. It was given to me by a friend, and I wear it with pride, regretting only that, it being a bow tie, I cannot look down upon it myself to derive the small pleasure it seems to give others. When I wear it, strangers have been known to smile as I pass. "Like your tie," a woman said to me in New York. "Wild tie, man," a kid remarked in Chicago. "That's great," another woman said, pointing at my tie in Bozeman, Montana. A bit of colorful silk around my throat livening an otherwise standard get-up may be as far as attitude goes with me, but, hey, when it comes to attitude, you have to take it where you can get it.

Joseph Epstein

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What We Don't Know is Hurting Us:

Finally, a Plan to Close the Environmental Health Gap

Our nation is not tracking where and how often chronic diseases occur and if there are links to environmental exposures – information that could be used to prevent asthma, birth defects, cancers and other chronic diseases.

To fill this critical environmental health gap that's put our families and communities at risk, the Pew Environmental Health Commission is urging the creation of a nationwide health tracking network. Its five-point plan recommends:

- tracking priority diseases and exposures nationwide;
- an early warning system for environmental health threats;
- state pilot tracking of local environmental health concerns;
- investigations of outbreaks, clusters, and emerging threats; and
- linking nationwide tracking to a collaborative research agenda and local community efforts to prevent disease.

A nationwide health tracking network will provide public health professionals with the information they need, preserve our privacy, and protect our families and communities from the number one cause of death in America – chronic disease. Now we have a plan, it's up to Congress and the Administration to act.

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Let's Iron Things Out

In his review of *Leo Strauss, the Straussians and the American Regime* ("Strauss Among the Straussians," Aug. 28/Sept. 4), Steven Lenzner has a number of things to say about my contribution, none of them flattering. I display a "marked indifference," he says, to "textual fidelity" in my interpretation of Strauss. According to Lenzner, when I quote from the beginning of Strauss's writings, I fail to take into account that these "are, as a rule, ironic." But Lenzner does not give any example of these ironic beginnings or explain by what rule they are ironic. Let me provide the reader with one of the most famous of these, the opening of *What Is Political Philosophy?*:

> It is a great honor, and at the same time a challenge to accept a task of particular difficulty, to be asked to speak about political philosophy in Jerusalem. In this city, and in this land, the theme of political philosophy—"the city of righteousness, the faithful city"—has been taken more seriously than anywhere else on earth. Nowhere else has the longing for justice and the just city filled the purest hearts and the loftiest souls with such zeal as on this sacred soil. I know all too well that I am utterly unable to convey to you what in the best possible case, in the case of any man, would be no more than a faint reproduction or a weak imitation of our prophets' vision. I shall even be compelled to lead you into a region where the dimmest recollection of that vision is on the point of vanishing altogether—where the Kingdom of God is derisively called an imagined principality—to say here nothing of the region which was never illumined by it. But while being compelled, or compelling myself, to wander far away from our sacred heritage, or to be silent about it, I shall not for a moment forget what Jerusalem stands for.

Anyone who, like Lenzner, finds in this an example of Strauss's irony, will quite properly accept all the negative things he has to say about me. Anyone who thinks, as I do, that here Strauss is speaking from the bottom of his heart and mind, will come to a different conclusion.

Harry V. Jaffa
Claremont, CA

Steven Lenzner's "Strauss Among the Straussians" purports to be a review of a new book on Leo Strauss, but is really an attack on one of Strauss's students, Harry Jaffa.

Jaffa is wrong, writes Lenzner, to argue that "the essential purpose of Leo Strauss's life and work" was "to secure recognition . . . of the moral authority based upon the dignity of man, supported both by reason and

revelation." Lenzner's Strauss is rather a philosopher who as such "cannot recognize authority as binding upon thought."

Fair enough, as far as it goes. But Lenzner misses a fundamental point in Strauss's analysis of modernity. Strauss recognized that, in the modern world, the link between the divine and the law—"so vital in the ancient world"—had been severed. Thus the most important challenge facing modern man was to find some ground of obligation upon which the law could stand, and which at the same time would not offend the piety of the faithful. This is what Strauss meant by the "theologico-political predicament."

This new ground was ultimately discovered not by philosophers, but by statesmen. The American Founders articulated principles based on individual natural rights and government by consent, but understood in the light of the obligatory "laws of nature and of nature's God." Upon these principles they built a regime in which one can be simultaneously a good citizen, a good man, and a good Christian or Jew. Strauss indicated his profound respect for their solution when, near the center of his essay "On Classical Political Philosophy," he cites the republicanism of Thomas Jefferson as an example of what ancient philosophers meant by the "best regime."

Lenzner quotes Strauss: "By uprooting authority, philosophy recognizes nature as the standard." But Lenzner quotes him anachronistically. Surely so careful a reader as Lenzner should know that Strauss is here speaking of authority in its pre-1776 form, i.e., an authority divorced from nature and based on some claim of divinity. What Lenzner fails to understand is that in a regime which recognizes nature as the standard, the role of philosophy is not to uproot authority, but to defend it.

The great achievement of Leo Strauss was to rescue nature, which is the ground of both morality and philosophy, from the clutches of modern historicism, positivism, relativism, and nihilism. The great achievement of his student Harry Jaffa has been to explain how the natural right principles of the United States at once support and require morality and philosophy.

Michael Anton
New York, NY

• • •

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Eleven Former FDA Commissioners Think All Americans Deserve To Be Protected.

Shortly, Congress will vote on a dangerous "reimportation" law. It would allow medicines that have been sent to foreign countries to be reimported into the United States. This will result in adulterated, spoiled and counterfeit drugs in America's medicine cabinets. America's health professionals and eleven former FDA Commissioners have expressed concerns about reimported drugs. They believe the American public deserves better.

The FDA assures Americans that their medicines are safe, effective and tested through strictly enforced trials. Simply put, this amendment creates a second-class safety standard. If it is passed, you may never know whether or not your drug meets FDA standards.

Reimported medicines that are unregulated are the wrong prescription for America. Former FDA Commissioners and many, many health professionals across the nation agree. To see the letters from the eleven former FDA Commissioners, please go to www.phrma.org/reimport.html.

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the weekly Standard

Permanent Normal Appeasement

This week the Senate will vote on granting China permanent most-favored-nation trade status. The vote comes a lot later than the Clinton administration and China's friends in the Senate wanted. Too close to the elections, you see, and therefore too likely to be infected by election-year "politics," i.e., the actual views of the American people. In poll after poll, Americans express keen distrust of China and skepticism about the benefits of extending permanent normal trade relations.

There was also the fear, expressed in mid-July by China's leading Senate defender, Max Baucus, that "the more the issue is delayed, the more likely it is that some untoward . . . event might occur that would deteriorate relations between our two countries." You know, something "untoward" like a Chinese attack on Taiwan, or some particularly brutal crackdown on political or religious groups. A majority of senators in both parties, in other words, wanted to get this vote out of the way before the next, entirely inevitable, Chinese outrage.

There has, in fact, been no shortage of outrages already. This past week the State Department reported that the Chinese government's treatment of religious groups had "deteriorated markedly" over the past year. Indeed, in recent days alone, three Falun Gong members, two of them elderly, have died after being arrested by the police. One mysteriously "fell" from a fourth-floor window. One died of apparent suffocation in prison. The third, a 60-year-old woman, appeared to have been beaten to death. But Falun Gong members are not the only victims of religious repression. The State Department reports that the "unremitting nationwide campaigns against 'cults' and superstition" have also had a predictable "spillover effect on other faiths." Protestant and Catholic groups not registered with the central authorities have suffered severe harassment, including "threats, demolition of unregistered property, extortion of 'fines,' interrogation, detention, and at times beatings and torture." The Vatican recently reported the arrest of an auxiliary bishop as part of a general crackdown on Catholics in central China.

Last week, too, the Beijing government stepped up its pressure on Taiwan, once again hinting of armed conflict and announcing that it will not begin cross-strait negotiations until Taiwan preemptively surrenders and accepts Beijing's definition of "One China." Beijing has also said it will use its pending membership in the World Trade Organization to block Taiwan's long-overdue entry into the WTO. China insists that Taiwan can enter only as a part of China. Under pressure from Congress, President Clinton has announced his opposition to Beijing's stance. But there is no guarantee that Clinton, or Al Gore, or for that matter George W. Bush will hold out against Chinese pressure when the time comes to take care of Taiwan's membership later this year or next.

None of these "untoward events" will have any effect on the thinking of Senator Baucus and his like-minded colleagues, of course. Even if China invaded Taiwan tomorrow, they would no doubt still argue the benefits of trading with Beijing. Corporate America wants to make money in China, and senators in both parties want money from corporate America. End of story. Senate majority leader Trent Lott says he intends to get the bill through no matter what. "It's not a question of if. It's a question of when." Those who raise concerns about giving China a free pass have been squashed. Jesse Helms and Paul Wellstone, for instance, offered an amendment to the trade bill requiring the president to certify whether or not there is religious freedom in China. This was very inconvenient, coming as it did at the same time as the State Department's damning report, so the amendment was defeated, 69-28. The fix is in. The Senate is on autopilot. All deliberation on this matter has ceased.

Well, almost all. Lott, Baucus, and company will have to figure out what to do about Senator Fred Thompson's amendment. For months Thompson has been pushing a measure that would punish China with sanctions if it were found to be in violation of international nuclear nonproliferation agreements. This is hardly a controversial proposal: Does anyone think it *shouldn't* be American policy to punish China for such violations? Nevertheless, the China lobby has raised a ruckus. Now the legislation targets other countries as well as China and, more signifi-

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cantly, gives the president a lot of flexibility to impose sanctions or not as he sees fit. This dilution of Thompson's proposal is unfortunate, but at least it has won broader support among Thompson's colleagues. Lott now says the Thompson measure is "right on the substance" and he would vote for it. Probably a number of other Republicans would, too, and so would many Democrats. Neither party wants to look soft on nuclear proliferation in an election year.

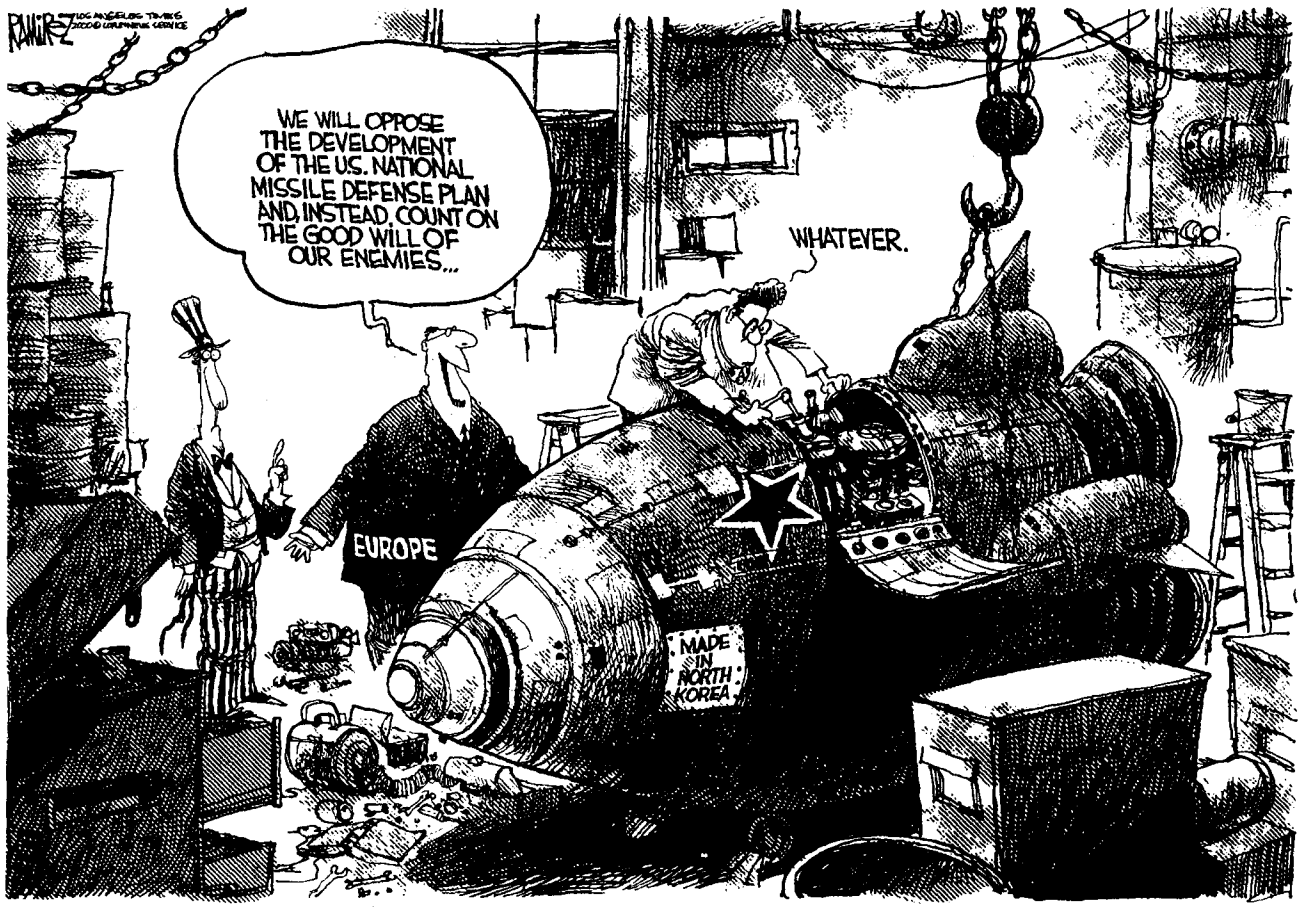
And that's precisely why Baucus and others are trying to derail Thompson's measure. If it comes up for a vote, it might just pass. China's backers in the Senate insist that would be a catastrophe, and not only because it would annoy Beijing. If the Senate bill is amended, the trade measure must go back to the House for another vote. Supporters of permanent trade status for China fear there might not be enough time left to complete work on the legislation before Congress leaves town this year. Final passage would have to wait until—gasp!—next year.

So what? Baucus and others say that if Congress fails to act this year, American companies won't benefit from the lower tariffs that will come with China's entry into the WTO. This is nonsense. China still has several hurdles to clear before it can join the trade organization. It first has to complete negotiations with the other member states, negotiations that may drag on for months. Then Beijing must reach agreement with the WTO on implementation of its trade pacts. That will take time, too. Probably China won't be able to join the WTO until the end of this year, at the earliest. So American companies won't lose a blessed dollar if Congress waits until next year to complete work on the trade bill.

Let's be honest. The real reason the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and its servants in the Senate don't want to wait is the reason Baucus put forth in July: They're worried about those "untoward events." The longer they wait, the greater the chance that the Chinese government will do something horrible that might imperil passage of the trade bill.

Senators in both parties have been putting the squeeze on Thompson, trying to get him to back off and introduce his measure as a vacuous "sense of the Congress" resolution. We hope Thompson will hold steady on his course. Being inconvenient can be a lonely occupation; in the late 1970s, Scoop Jackson had the inconvenient habit of making everybody uncomfortable, too. But now as then, somebody needs to stand firm. When it comes to dealing with China, there's not much guts or integrity left in either party.

—Robert Kagan, for the Editors



Michael Rameriz

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Relinking Gore to Clinton

Voters want a president who will share Clinton's policies, but not his morals. BY FRED BARNES

AROUND THE TIME of the political conventions in August, voters were asked in a Gallup poll to take another stab at the 1992 election. This time, President George Bush defeated Bill Clinton by 53 percent to 42 percent. Then, assuming Clinton could run for another term, they were asked if they preferred him or George W. Bush. The answer was Bush, 51 percent to 45 percent. Finally, this same group of voters registered a verdict on Clinton's presidency. A whopping 68 percent said it's been a success, 29 percent a failure. The meaning of all this: The Clinton bifurcation lives! Voters still like Clinton's performance as president but they don't want him around. And so in the 2000 election, voters want a new president who's the opposite of him personally—and especially morally—but not a strong critic of his policies.

Until a month ago, that person was George W. Bush. His compassionate conservatism isn't a radical departure from this administration's policies, but he's quite unlike Clinton personally. Now, Al Gore has changed things by pulling off a strategically brilliant political transformation. Gore re-mains vice president in name only. He's disconnected himself from Clinton and shaped his image to meet the requirements of the Clinton bifurcation. His policies are roughly the same, but he's presenting himself as morally separate. How's he done it? First by picking a religious person and critic of Clinton's morals, Joe Lieberman, as his vice presidential running mate. And then by talking up religion, playing the family man by showing off his wife and children at the Democratic convention, and emphasizing the future rather than the Clinton-Gore past. Also, says chief Bush strategist Karl Rove, Gore's kissing his wife after she addressed the Democratic convention "worked . . . unbelievably."

So, eight weeks out, the presidential race comes down to a single question: Will Gore's separation from Clinton endure? Bush and his advisers recognize how difficult Gore will be to defeat if he's no longer seen as an extension of Clinton, indeed as the vehicle for a third Clinton term in the White House. Their goal is, in Rove's words, to "re-link Gore to Clinton." The job won't be easy. Gore has gained spectacularly on the moral issue in the campaign. A month ago, voters who said morality is a top issue preferred Bush by 68 percent to 24 percent, according to pollster John Zogby. But a post-convention survey by *Newsweek* found Gore leading Bush by 7 percentage points on who can best promote moral values. That poll was skewed by sampling too many Democrats. But a *Washington Post*/ABC News poll released last week showed Gore, after running 11 points behind before the conventions, has pulled even with Bush on the moral issue.

Worried, the Bush campaign conducted two focus groups in early September with what it calls "new Gore voters," ones who migrated to the vice president after the conventions. When a White House scandal involving Gore was cited, "there was a lot of nervous laughter," says a Bush aide who observed the sessions. In response, the Gore voters spontaneously began to mention other controversial Gore activity. This was obviously encouraging to the Bush camp. Now, the Bushies expect to raise at least a half-dozen of these embarrassing episodes in ads, Bush speeches, or the debates. These include Gore's alibi that "no controlling legal authority" barred fund-raising calls from the White House, his appearance at a fund-raiser at a Buddhist temple, his none-too-credible insistence it wasn't a fund-raiser, his excuse he was in the men's room when allegedly illegal money-raising tactics were discussed at the White House, and his claim that Clinton will be seen as one of America's "greatest presidents."

For sure, the Bush campaign will be accused of dwelling on the past, being negative, and focusing on Clinton, who's leaving office. Bush has said he wouldn't attack the president, but he doesn't need to. His task is simply to connect Gore to Clinton and to Clinton-related wrongdoing. True, this would stress the past. But contrary to conventional wisdom, most presidential elections *are* about the past. In 1960, John F. Kennedy was elected in reaction to the tired Eisenhower administration. Ronald Reagan won in 1980 because the Carter presidency had failed in economic and foreign policy. In 1988, George Bush Sr. won because the Reagan administration had succeeded on those issues. Four years later, Clinton was elected because the Bush administration seemed adrift. And so on.

The importance of the past makes Gore's feat of disassociating himself from Clinton, for the moment at least, all the more impressive. "Everything Gore's doing is working," says Republican strategist Jeffrey Bell (coiner of the term "Clinton bifurcation"). The architect of this strategy was pollster Stan Greenberg, who worked for Clinton

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in 1992 but didn't join Gore until early August. Greenberg spent most of the 1990s thinking and writing about how Democrats could attract middle-class voters. Just last month, he wrote in the *American Prospect* that Democrats should "re-enter the values debate." Voters like candidates who "put the family at the center of political discussion," Greenberg wrote, "and who devote themselves to a policy agenda that will help families meet the myriad challenges they face." This leads to the "middle-class populism" of government aid for college tuition, child care, prescription drugs, and health insurance that Gore proposes.

But that's not all of it. "Voters are drawn to Democrats who respect the public's religious faith and belief in personal responsibility," Greenberg wrote. "Reading Greenberg's article," says Marshall Wittmann of the Hudson Institute, a Republican, "you can see Greenberg telling Gore, 'You must choose Lieberman as your running mate.'" Lieberman, an Orthodox Jew, certainly has delivered the goods, speaking incessantly about religion and morality. Gore "had to have" Lieberman to distance himself from Clinton, argues Wittmann. "No one else would have made it real."

For his part, Bush has de-emphasized religious faith since the Republican primaries, notably since his appearance at Bob Jones University in South Carolina became controversial. The Bush strategy assumed religious faith was useful politically with GOP voters, but wouldn't help in the general election. This left a void that Gore and Lieberman have filled.

In one way, touting faith is a cynical ploy. Lieberman didn't yap this much about religion until quite recently. In fact, reporters who covered Lieberman had a tacit agreement not to ask him about religion. No more. The message from Gore and Lieberman is: *We're religious, we're moral, we're not like Clinton.* Now, it's time for Bush's countermessage. ♦

The Clinton-Gore Texas Two-Step

How the White House killed Bush's health care plan for poor kids. BY KENNETH WEINSTEIN

THE GORE CAMPAIGN has just launched a blistering $5.4 million ad campaign that attacks George W. Bush's record as governor on providing health care to children in Texas. After noting that "George Bush says he has a plan to improve children's health care," the ad rhetorically asks, "Why hasn't he done it in Texas?" Well, the answer is quite simple: President Clinton and Vice President Gore did all that they could to prevent Bush from doing so.

In 1995, under Bush's leadership and with bipartisan support, the Texas legislature authorized a sweeping social service reform. Through the use of competitive bidding, the costs for administering the state's health and human services programs would be reduced. The aim was simple: to use savings generated to improve services to the poor. Under the plan, the state would contract with private companies to process Medicaid, food stamp, and AFDC claims. Merging these various state aid offices and contracting out their services would have saved taxpayers $10 million a month. These savings would have been plowed directly into paying for health care for uninsured children in Texas, whose numbers, according to some liberal activists, range as high as 1,400,000.

For this program to be implemented, Texas needed to get a waiver from the Clinton administration. Specifically, the federal welfare regulations that prohibit employees of private firms from deciding caseload eligibility would have had to be eased. Bush spent nearly ten months seeking this waiver.

The waiver request caused heartburn for the Clinton administration. An internal White House memo, dated April 4, 1997, indicates there was administration support for elements of the Bush plan. The memo, signed by health and human services secretary Donna Shalala, agriculture secretary Dan Glickman, and Bruce Reed, assistant to the president for domestic policy, urged a prompt response to Bush's "good faith" efforts at reform. In particular, the memo noted that under Bush's plan, "the state could save enough to expand health care coverage to up to 150,000 needy children." (Other estimates given in the press said that the savings could have provided health care for up to twice that number of needy youngsters.)

Recognizing the clear benefits of Bush's approach, Shalala, Glickman, and Reed urged a compromise, forcing the private contractors to work with public employees to screen applicants. Signing off on this compromise, they noted, would encourage other states to "explore innovative ways to deliver public services."

But even this compromise, which would have severely reduced the savings generated, was too much for the administration's politicos. Organized labor, fresh from its efforts on behalf of congressional Democrats in the 1996 campaign, wanted to kill the Bush plan as part of its drive to stop privatization in its tracks. In their memo, Shalala, Glickman, and Reed frankly attributed union opposition to fear of public sector layoffs. In late March 1997, union leaders, including AFL-CIO president John Sweeney, demanded and were granted a meet-

Kenneth Weinstein is senior fellow and director of the Washington office of the Hudson Institute.

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ing with President Clinton where they insisted that he scuttle the Bush plan. In late April, when he addressed the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, Vice President Gore was urged to kill the plan. Labor's threat, reportedly voiced in a variety of ways, was that if the Texas plan were approved, labor would side with Dick Gephardt, House minority leader, were Gephardt to challenge Gore in the 2000 primaries.

Sensing both its debt to labor and this threat, the Clinton-Gore administration decided to protect the jobs of public employees at the expense of increased health care for the needy children of Texas. In May 1997, reportedly at Gore's insistence, Clinton rejected both the Bush plan and the Shalala-Glickman-Reed compromise.

So the next time one of those ads runs, just remember: At least 150,000 children in Texas are doing without health care because of the Clinton-Gore administration. ♦

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Pssst—Wanna New Drug Plan?

In Michigan's Senate race, the Gore-style prescription plan is losing. BY MATTHEW REES

DEBBIE STABENOW, a Democratic congresswoman who's running to unseat senator Spencer Abraham, stood in a Southfield, Michigan, pharmacy a year ago August and previewed the issue that would become the centerpiece of her campaign. "It is absolutely, fundamentally wrong," she charged, "that senior citizens in the United States are paying so much for prescription drugs." The solution, she said, is simple: Have the government pick up the tab.

In a Gingrich-free, economically prosperous election year, calling for Washington to pick up seniors' prescription drug costs seems tactically smart, especially in Michigan, where polls show health care is far and away the voters' top concern. Indeed, with Stabenow and Abraham in a dead heat from the moment she entered the race 18 months ago until very recently, she had every reason to believe the prescription drug issue could catapult her into the Senate.

To this end, Stabenow has put nearly all her eggs in the prescription-drug basket. She's aired television ads on the subject, she's twice chartered an "Rx Express" bus to take seniors to buy cheaper drugs in neighboring Canada, and she even took dogs to a press conference, claiming their arthritis medication cost one-third what humans pay for theirs.

But Stabenow's crusade has yet to energize Michigan's voters. Why? Because rather than cowering in fear—the standard tactic for Republicans in recent years when the subject is health care—Abraham has gone on the offensive. In July, he introduced a less expensive proposal to enhance prescription-drug coverage, awarding discounts only for the needy (under Stabenow's plan, as Abraham points out, even Ross Perot and Donald Trump would be eligible for subsidies).

More important, he's aggressively publicized the flaws in Stabenow's proposal, which mirrors the proposal advanced by Richard Gephardt, the House Democratic leader. Using figures from the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, Abraham's ads note that the Democratic plan would result in annual premiums of $600, drug costs that could reach $7,000 a year, and no choice of coverage.

"A prescription for disaster," according to one of Abraham's television ads. To underscore the point, his campaign frequently charges that "Debbie Stabenow and Hillary Clinton want to import Canadian health care to America"—a lethal charge in a state that serves many Canadians who come to the United States for health care.

The result? Since his first prescription-drug ad began airing, on August 14, Abraham's lead has reached unprecedented levels. A *Detroit News* poll released August 29 showed him ahead of Stabenow by 9 points, and a Rasmussen poll released a week later had him up 12 points. The best news of all for Abraham, contained in the *Detroit News* poll, was that among those aged 60-69, he led by 9 points, and even among those 70 and over he enjoyed a 2-point lead.

Matthew Rees is a staff writer at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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Abraham's lead will shrink, of course, once Stabenow ups her spending on television advertising. In 1994, she sought the Democratic party's gubernatorial nomination, emphasizing her 16 years in the state legislature and her status as a single mother of two. When her campaign stalled, as this one has, she aired a series of vicious and misleading ads against one of her opponents, Howard Wolpe. He narrowly defeated her, but not before asking, "Is there nothing she would not do to gain election?"

So while Abraham can expect a pounding, his prospects for victory remain strong. Not only has he turned the centerpiece of her campaign into a liability, he has twice as much money on hand as she does and has retained the services of Mike Murphy, a skilled adman familiar with the state.

A Detroit native, Murphy was the media consultant for Abraham's campaign six years ago, helped elect John Engler governor three times, and was the chief strategist behind John McCain's upset victory in Michigan's presidential primary.

Murphy won't have much trouble slicing and dicing Stabenow, who's undergone an ideological makeover that would do Dick Morris proud. To win a seat in Congress in 1996, she downplayed her liberal background, defeating a Republican incumbent in a swing district and emerging as a darling of the centrist Democratic Leadership Council. She kept up the pretense of being a moderate during her first term in the House, but since announcing for the Senate, she's forsaken the label.

Nowhere does her campaign literature link her to the DLC, and when I asked her campaign whether she was running as a moderate or a liberal, a spokeswoman would say only, "She's running on the side of Michigan families." (Abraham's campaign has launched a website to highlight Stabenow's record, *www.LiberalDebbie.com*.)

Spence Abraham

Illustration by Jay Lincoln

Stabenow's reluctance to identify her ideology makes sense, given her repeated violations of DLC/New Democrat orthodoxy. She's voted against giving China permanent normal trade relations and against giving the president unilateral authority to negotiate trade deals. On immigration, she's run away from her vote to allow more high-tech workers into the country, saying that an anti-immigration group that's run ads against Abraham for sponsoring the high-tech-worker legislation has raised a "legitimate" issue. And on education, she gets a perfect score from the Michigan Federation of Teachers, a union that's adamantly opposed to even the most cautious experimentation with vouchers for low-income children. "Ever since she's been involved in politics," the federation's president, Rollie Hopgood, told me, "we've been able to count on her."

That said, the race won't be a cakewalk for Abraham. Stabenow will paint him as an extreme conservative, and labor unions are likely to spend heavily to defeat him. As for the state's Democrats, they've exhibited an extraordinary willingness to vote for just about anyone to defeat Republicans. Two years ago, the Democratic nominee for governor, Geoffrey Fieger, was best known for being Jack Kevorkian's lawyer and for making intemperate statements (he once described Jesus as "just some goofball that got nailed to the cross"). Widely dismissed as a hopeless candidate, he still won 38 percent of the vote. Adding to the unpredictability of the race is the likelihood that presidential politics will intrude, given the importance of Michigan to Al Gore and George W. Bush.

Even so, Abraham is in a much stronger position than anyone expected at this point in the campaign, and that's almost entirely because of his willingness to challenge Stabenow on the Democratic prescription-drug plan. Other Republican candidates, nearly all of whom are running scared on the issue, should take note. ♦

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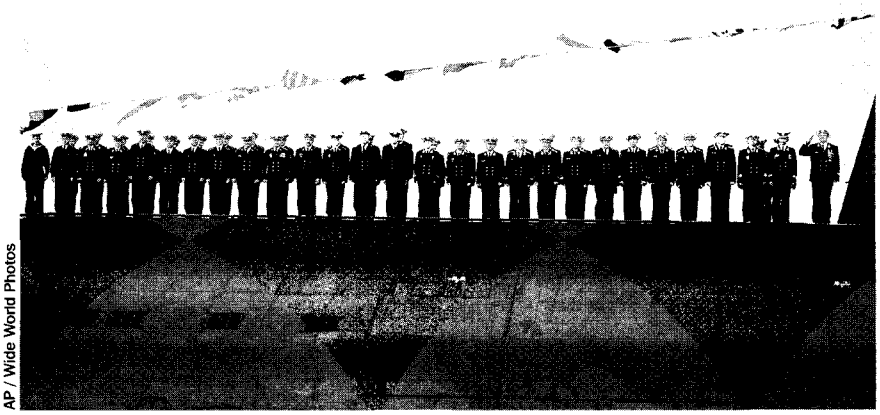
The Lesson of the *Kursk*

Residual respect for Russia's might went down with the submarine. BY TOM DONNELLY



AP / Wide World Photos

The men of the Kursk, *July 2000*

IT IS A uniquely humiliating twist to the story of the lost submarine and the 118 sailors now entombed at the bottom of the Barents Sea: Before August, there was no prouder name than "Kursk" in Russian military history. Today, the name evokes tragedy and shame and the steep decline in Russian military power.

The ruptured submarine *Kursk*—apparently destroyed by the misfiring of its own weapons, according to data collected by U.S. Navy vessels nearby—took its name from the battle of Kursk, the epic armored struggle between the Red Army and the *Wehrmacht* on the steppes of the Ukraine in July 1943 that finally turned the tide on the Eastern Front.

The largest tank battle in history, Kursk featured titanic leaders like Field Marshall Erich von Manstein, for the Third Reich, and Marshall Georgi Zhukov, for the Soviet Union. When the fight was over, the decisive battlefield was littered with the burning carcasses of hundreds of tanks, many of them destroyed at point-blank range. Tactically, Kursk was a draw, but it established the Soviet Union as more than a match for the Nazis. Naturally, it became a centerpiece of Soviet propaganda about the Great Patriotic War, and it remains a mythic episode in the annals of the Russian military.

How cruel that "Kursk" should now come to stand for Russian weakness. Before the accident that sank her, the *Kursk* was participating in a limited exercise, a warm-up for a larger exercise intended to echo, however faintly, the Soviet Union's aspiration to global naval power. But the U.S. Navy no longer bothers to track at close range even large Russian naval exercises, and the listening ships and submarines that heard the dying agony of the *Kursk* were miles away. Much of the Russian navy is being cut up for scrap metal; the once massive Red Army tank fleets sit rusting; and the Russian military is strained to the limit to suppress the unruly Chechens. Most significantly, the Russian nuclear arsenal rots in its silos and warehouses—indeed, Russia's worries about a limited U.S. ballistic missile defense are understandable, given the decaying state of this last symbol of lost superpower status.

The tale of the *Kursk* ought to spur Americans to reexamine the realities of Russian military power and strategy. Since the collapse of the Soviet empire, Russia's ability to threaten anyone outside its own shrunken borders has diminished tremendously, yet U.S. policy clings to the notion that Russia remains, or could again soon become, a great power. Although the power of Moscow is at a 400-year low and may decline further, American leaders act as though Russia were potentially a "strategic partner" or competitor of great weight. It is as though the loss of the Cold War were to be ignored.

Perhaps more important, Russia is in internal disarray. It remains a vast country, home to a talented and educated people, with huge potential. But over the past century it has moved from feudalism to communism to a chaotic form of democracy struggling to offset the influence of a despotic oligopoly. Life expectancy for the average Russian is declining. The law does not rule, strongmen do. Russia has one foot in the 21st century but the other still in the Middle Ages.

Some have argued that U.S. policy toward Russia should reflect magnanimity in victory. But what sort of kindness is it to pretend that Russia is a very great power when its own people and leaders know it is not? To genuflect before dying imperial impulses by moving slowly to expand NATO, tolerating butchery in the Balkans, and looking the other way in the Caucasus—is this generosity or condescension? Are we going easy on the Russians—or on ourselves, shirking the burdens that fall to the solitary superpower? ♦

Tom Donnelly is deputy executive director of the Project for the New American Century.

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Combustion Engine Voters

In a state where they love cars, Al Gore is an acquired taste. BY HENRY PAYNE & DIANE KATZ

Monroe, Michigan

THIS QUAINT southeast Michigan town, its clock tower dated 1880, served as the backdrop for Bill Clinton's passing of the torch to Al Gore during the Democratic National Convention in August. Shots of the two men shoulder to shoulder amid a rain of tricolor confetti made for splendid visuals on the network news and the newspapers' front pages.

But Monroe County isn't Gore country. It's a key swing district in a major swing state. This is the Michigan county where the outcome in the last three presidential elections most closely mirrored the statewide vote. Party identification here is 30 percent Democrat, 30 percent Republican, and 40 percent independent. These are the independent-minded and undecided voters that both presidential candidates are vying to attract.

And here, despite the Democratic party's traditional support in the blue-collar heartland, much of Gore's platform is in tension with the daily reality and time-tested values of the "working families" for whom he pledges to fight. Spend enough time with the people of Monroe, and you come to see Al Gore as a candidate largely disconnected from the voters.

The audience of 15,000 that crowded Monroe's central square for the Clinton-Gore handoff heard the president and vice president claim credit for bringing Monroe's once moribund economy to its current robust state. "You know, Bill Clinton worked hard to get this economy right," shouted Gore to the throng. "And I'm pledging to you here today, I am not going to let the other side wreck it!"

That times have improved is indisputable. But Monroe's revival took hold during the Reagan-Bush years: Unemployment here was cut in half between 1983 and 1992. Moreover, the town's fortunes are tied to the heavy industry and sprawling suburban construction that Gore warns will be our undoing. Monroe may represent the American dream for the people who live here, but it is Al Gore's American nightmare.

The differences between Gore and Monroe begin with the county seat's "big polluters," as the vice president would call them. Rising 400 feet above Lake Erie's bank, east of Monroe, are the twin towers of Detroit Edison's Fermi II nuclear power plant. Down the road is the utility's coal-burning colossus, among the nation's biggest, with a generating capacity of 3,000 megawatts. The two plants combined employ more than 1,500 workers, who would be hard-pressed to earn comparable paychecks should Gore succeed in his efforts to phase out nuclear power, drastically limit power plant emissions, and mandate cuts in U.S. energy consumption.

Monroe also is home to Visteon and Tenneco, auto parts giants that supply components for the internal

Henry Payne is the editorial cartoonist and a writer for the Detroit News. *Diane Katz is an editorial writer for the* News.

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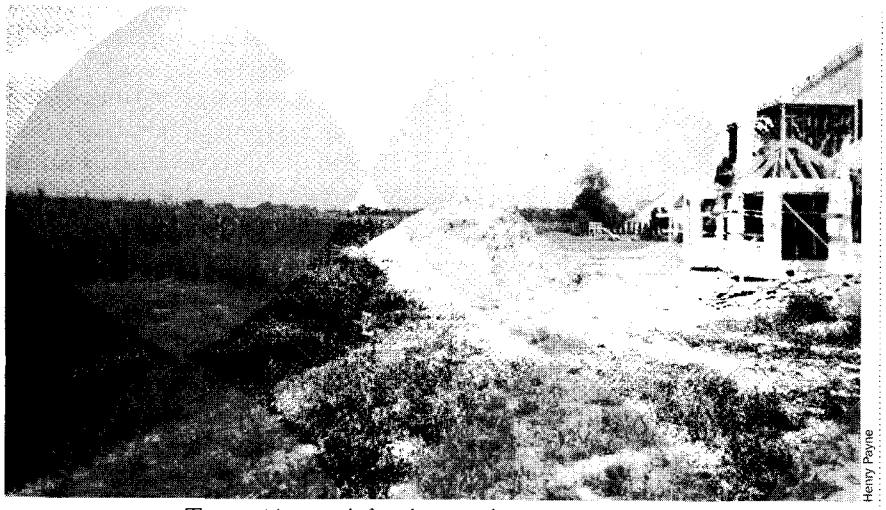

Henry Payne

To some it's sprawl; for others, good construction jobs.

combustion engines that Gore wishes to eliminate. Just north along Interstate-75, in Flat Rock, a Mazda auto assembly plant employs 3,500.

Loads of overtime and fat profit-sharing checks from record sales of SUVs—the antithesis of Gore's transportation vision—have enabled factory workers to buy new homes on lots where soybeans, alfalfa, and sugar beets lately grew.

Developments like Carrington Farms, on Monroe's outskirts just minutes from I-75, also are attracting executives willing to commute 45 minutes or more to jobs in Detroit or Toledo—the urban cores where critics of sprawl believe housing should remain concentrated. Real estate broker Doris Lebeau, who has sold homes in Monroe since 1973, says the area is fast becoming a bedroom community. "People come here because they can buy a little less expensive house and get a little more elbow room," she explains.

The building boom, in fact, has increased construction wages in the county by more than $10 million in a single year. In turn, Monroe's population has grown by 15,000 in the past decade. This is precisely the urban sprawl that the vice president has said "sucks the life out of urban areas, increases congestion in the suburbs, and raises taxes on farms."

Gore won't find many supporters for this argument in Monroe County. On August 30, residents celebrated the grand opening of a 225,000-square-foot Cabela's, an outdoor equipment retailer that displaced a soybean field. Along with a new Wal-Mart and Meijers nearby, the arrival of Cabela's further shifts the region's commercial center of gravity outward from Detroit and integrates this county, once lopsidedly dependent on the auto industry, into a broader more diversified economy. Adjacent farmland, sold at a premium, is being cleared for motels and retail outlets that the county anticipates will become a tourist draw.

Gore's attacks on "the wealthy" and his promise to cow HMO bureaucrats drew applause. But question voters about Gore's specific policy prescriptions and their enthusiasm gives way to suspicion.

Indeed, Cabela's attracted 20,000 shoppers on opening day, with cashiers ringing up brisk sales of firearms and hunting gear, and the upper level café filled with folks sampling bison, ostrich, and smoked caribou. Guys like Bill Timler, who works for a fabricating firm, couldn't be happier. "This is good for the community," he said. "It will attract people, money, and business."

Chris Pletz is another direct beneficiary. His new job at Cabela's pays considerably more than he earned as a laborer for a mold injection company, and he now has top-tier insurance coverage and holiday bonuses. It is no accident that Cabela's has located here. Monroe County's residents love to hunt and fish. And they don't like liberal Democrats who want to restrict their access to guns and public lands.

It's a tough sell, then, to convince Monroe residents that they are victims of capitalist greed, somehow in need of Big Government protection. "Government doesn't need to be involved in everything," said Leesha Glenn, a working mother of three. To be sure, Gore's attacks on "the wealthy" and his promise to cow HMO bureaucrats drew applause here. (One woman told us, "We should get our health care for free, like Germany.") But question voters about Gore's specific policy prescriptions—his support for gun control and unrestricted abortion, and his radical environmental agenda—and their enthusiasm gives way to suspicion.

"Gore would be at odds with people here on most things," says Randy Richardville, himself a sign of the times as Monroe's first Republican state legislator in 35 years. Where voting Democratic once was virtually hereditary, party loyalty now is weak. "When I was growing up," says Brad Gerber, newly employed by Cabela's, "Democrats were for the working guy. Not any more. Now guys like Gore seem to be easily influenced by interest groups and political correctness."

Asked how he would campaign here if he were running against Al Gore, Richardville had no hesitation: "I'd go door to door and read folks his views about the automobile." ♦

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In Defense of Soft Money

The senior senator from Kentucky enters a dissent. BY MITCH MCCONNELL

WRITING IN THE JULY 31 issue of THE WEEKLY STANDARD, William Kristol and Jeffrey Bell argue that conservatives should drop their opposition to banning or severely limiting the political parties' use of "soft money." To compensate for the loss of soft money, Kristol and Bell advocate increasing the limits on "hard money." (Soft money, not subject to limits under federal law, can be used for issue advocacy, voter turnout, party-building, and support of state and local candidates. Hard money can be used to expressly advocate the election or defeat of federal candidates.)

There are a number of problems with the Kristol-Bell proposal. Most hard money contributions to the parties are far below the current limit, so raising that limit would recapture few of the soft dollars lost to campaign finance "reform." Moreover, hard money contributions from corporations are prohibited, so none of the corporate soft money funds lost could be recovered. Consequently, the parties would be starved for funds. This would disproportionately harm Republicans, because we are far more reliant than the Democrats on party committees. The Democrats would still have the labor unions' assistance, funded with compulsory dues, in the form of telephone banks, manpower, membership communications, and television and radio ads. Republicans have no comparable ally.

Party soft money is not a zero-sum game. That is why Republican nominee George W. Bush insists that the Paycheck Protection Act, ensuring that no union worker is forced to subsidize partisan politics, be part of any campaign finance reform package. It also should not be forgotten that the parties are now a relatively small voice in the political landscape and must already struggle to be heard amid the din of media editorializing and private group expenditures independent of campaigns.

The media, unquestionably biased toward liberals and Democrats, have enormous influence on American politics. They largely determine what issues dominate the public agenda, champion favored candidates, and attack disfavored candidates. It is interesting to note, as acknowledgment of their value to campaigns, that newspapers, magazines, and broadcasters benefit from a special exemption from federal campaign finance restrictions (2 U.S.C. § 441(b)). Otherwise, their editorials would be subject to government regulation and limits. These media contributions are predominately pro-Democrat. They would be even more influential if the Republican party were hampered by restrictions or a prohibition on soft money.

Kristol and Bell predicate their recommendation on three assumptions: (1) campaign finance reform is "popular with the public," (2) soft money gives Democrats leverage over business, and (3) Democrats have become successful soft-money fund-raisers. The first two assumptions are false, and the third is irrelevant.

The truth is, campaign finance reform does not and has never registered with the public as an important national issue, despite twenty-five years of cheerleading for reform by the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. Were the public hungering for reform, John McCain and Bill Bradley would be squaring off for the presidency.

Reformers who agitate for the McCain-Feingold bill's ban on party soft money do so because they believe that soft money gives business too much leverage over Democrats (and Republicans), not, as Kristol and Bell contend, vice versa. If soft money has made some Democrats more amenable to pro-business initiatives like free trade, bravo. Perhaps Americans should applaud. Conservatives should be thrilled.

The Democratic committees are presently raising more soft money than they used to. But Republicans still raise significantly more overall and rely on it far more than do the Democrats. Even if there were parity between the parties, prohibiting or severely limiting soft money would be a bad idea.

The national parties raise and spend a great deal of soft money to benefit their entire slate of candidates, including nominees for state and local offices. These soft money funds are raised in compliance with state laws. Thirty states allow corporate contributions. The national parties cannot be barred from raising soft money without overriding the states through a complete federal takeover of campaign finance. Such a federal takeover would entail a gargantuan enforcement apparatus, with the federal government policing political speech in all fifty states. Most conservatives recoil from such crazy, unconstitutional nonsense.

Conservative principles should not be tossed overboard in a misguided quest to appease liberal reformers and their media allies. The conservative and constitutional reform agenda calls for less regulation of political speech, not more: It consists of paycheck protection for workers, common-sense inflation adjustments of hard money limits so there will be less need for soft money, and expedited public disclosure on the Internet.

Leave soft money alone. ♦

Mitch McConnell is chairman of the National Republican Senatorial Committee.

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How Bush Can Win

For starters, run as a conservative.

By William Kristol

For the last half century, no presidential candidate behind in the polls on Labor Day has gone on to win. George W. Bush was behind on Labor Day, and sliding. Can he turn it around?

Sure. Harry Truman did in 1948. And in any case, these rules are made to be broken. Remember the iron law that the party in the White House always loses seats in the congressional election in its sixth year in office? Newt Gingrich does.

How can Bush do it? Here's a simple suggestion. George W. Bush is a reasonably conservative Republican who deeply disapproves of Bill Clinton's conduct in the White House. Perhaps he should run as a reasonably conservative Republican who deeply disapproves of Bill Clinton's conduct in the White House.

This would require abandoning the central conceit of the Bush campaign: that George W. Bush is so personally attractive that partisanship and ideology and passing judgment on Bill Clinton are unnecessary burdens for him to bear. Like many politicians, Bush thinks the contest should be about him. He also thinks that if it is, he'll win. He's probably wrong on both counts. Like most elections, this one is primarily about the incumbents, Clinton and Gore. And even if it could be made to be about Bush, it's not clear that would mean victory. Bush's route to victory is not through personality. If there is one, it's through ideology and contrast and partisanship.

I know, I know: Partisanship is uncool, and being Republican is uncool, and any association with *congressional* Republicans is way uncool. So Bush has shunned partisanship and barely mentions his party. In his convention acceptance speech, Bush was entirely nonpartisan or bipartisan. He claimed an ability to govern without regard to party. Each of the three times he said the word "Republican," it was paired with "Democrat," as in "I work with Republicans and Democrats to get things done." His aides emphasize that Bush is a "different kind of Republican." And above all, they see to it that he is in no way associated with those dread congressional Republicans.

William Kristol is editor and publisher of The Weekly Standard.

The trouble is that this different kind of Republican is no longer doing better than regular old congressional Republicans. Bush runs no better against Gore than congressional Republicans do in the polls. So Bush is now, in effect, an ordinary Republican. But this isn't so bad. After all, despite all their mistakes and the burden of Newt, House Republicans did get more votes than Democrats in the last three elections. So did Republican Senate candidates and Republican governors. This suggests that if this year's presidential election were to be a routinely partisan one, Bush would have close to a 50-50 chance. Those odds look pretty good right now.

To get those odds, Bush would have to run the risk of greater identification with the Republican Congress. But this would bring with it a real benefit: Bush could take some credit for the accomplishments of that Congress. More important, he could deprive Al Gore of his claim to exclusive responsibility for the current beneficent state of affairs. Convincing people that the last eight years have been "squandered," as Bush has been trying to do, is harder than convincing them that the GOP deserves some credit for the achievements of those years.

In particular, it would help Bush to remind voters that Republicans stopped Clinton-Gore from doing some bad things (especially health care in 1993-1994), pushed Clinton-Gore to do some things they didn't originally want to do (balance the budget, reform welfare, cut some taxes), and tried to accomplish some good things that Clinton-Gore vetoed (banning partial-birth abortion, experiments in school choice for poor kids, further tax cuts).

Now in each of these areas, as it happens, there were Democrats in Congress who voted with the GOP and against Clinton-Gore (e.g., Joe Lieberman). Bush can effectively cite such members in ads to make the point that the Republican position is often a bipartisan one. But he shouldn't make a fetish out of bipartisanship: The deeper case he must make is partisan. Because if he fails to make it to some extent (he needn't embrace every aspect of the GOP Congress), then Clinton and Gore get all the credit for the economy, welfare reform, and the like. That's probably too much of a burden for a challenger to overcome.

Some degree of partisanship, then, is necessary. So is some degree of ideology. In fact, making the case for conservatism would have a higher payoff for Bush than

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embracing Republicanism. After all, self-identified conservatives outnumber self-proclaimed liberals by about three to two in the electorate, and most of the remaining 40 percent or so of voters who call themselves moderate are susceptible to conservative appeals.

Lots of them aren't even particularly intimidated by the notion that they might not be viewed as compassionate. After all, majorities in California, a Democratic state, voted to abolish racial preferences in 1996 and bilingual education in 1998 (and both reforms have worked out admirably). Conservative policies *are* "compassionate," so there's no need for Bush to run away from "compassionate conservatism." But a little more emphasis on the noun rather than the adjective would be a good idea.

For Bush's muting of his conservatism has a hidden cost: It has made it impossible for him to tag Al Gore with liberalism. The point of running as a conservative is not simply to hold the ideological banner aloft for yourself. It's to define your opponent ideologically as well. If you don't do the first, you can't do the second. Al Gore is a liberal, and a pretty dogmatic one. But he, needless to say, never uses the word—and neither does George Bush. "Liberal" never appeared in Bush's convention speech, and has rarely been invoked since.

Bush's muting of his conservatism has made it impossible for him to tag Al Gore with liberalism.

So Gore gets to define himself as a middle-class populist who's in favor of various attractive programs. He is never forced to beat back the charge that all of his talk adds up to that old, but still somewhat reliable bogeyman—elitist, big government liberalism. Doesn't the Bush campaign have clips of Gore defending gays in the military in 1993? Hillarycare in 1994? Defending racial preferences and partial-birth abortion? Can't similarities be drawn between (at least the implications of) Gore's current prescription drug proposal and the risky health care scheme he was so fond of just a few years ago? Is the main problem, as Bush seemed to suggest last week, that Gore hasn't done enough and that his program will phase in too slowly? Isn't the problem rather that what Gore wants to do will be positively damaging to our excellent health care system and to our vibrant economy?

And, while we're at it, what about the automobile, that great blight on our civilization? And what will Gore's judges do to Lieberman's hopes for more respect for religion in the public square? And won't Gore's first judicial appointment join to overturn the Boy Scouts decision? And incidentally, is Gore willing to say that abortion should be not only legal but rare? Gore really is more liberal than Clinton. Bush might as well say so.

Speaking of Clinton . . . Bush doesn't want to. "I'm not going to attack President Clinton," he said August 30. Why not? Isn't Gore's eager participation in a dishonorable administration one of the main reasons he shouldn't be president? Is the fundamental problem of the Clinton-Gore years really that "they failed to lead"? Is that the main reason "it's time for them to go"?

Bush and Cheney invoked Clinton repeatedly at the convention. And polls show that a strong majority of Americans are hostile to the (admittedly metaphorical) idea of a third Clinton term. But then Gore, as it were, ditched Clinton for Lieberman, and he's done well ever since. Bush and Cheney need to relink Gore to Clinton.

The way to do this is to make a serious argument about the disgrace of the Clinton administration. "Tongue-in-cheek" ads alluding to Gore's Buddhist temple visit won't work. Such ads won't even achieve what Bush believes to be their purpose: "The point is, this [ad] is a way to help inoculate me about what has come and is coming," because Gore is "a fellow that will say anything."

Indeed he is. But Bush misses the point. The point is not to "inoculate" Bush. The point is to make a serious case against Gore's fitness to be president. Bush needs to treat Gore not as just another slippery politician but as a willing aider and abetter of Bill Clinton's corruption of the electoral, political, and legal processes of our nation. He needs to explain that to elect Gore is to fail to hold Clinton-Gore responsible for what they have done. This means that Bush must give one or more serious speeches in which he takes upon himself the unpleasant task of reminding us, and explaining to us, just how dishonorable the Clinton-Gore administration has been.

Then, when the Bush campaign puts up its ad, in the last two weeks of the campaign, showing Gore's famous December 19, 1998, encomium to Clinton as one of our greatest presidents, voters will understand that this is not just another "attack ad" but a matter of real import. Bush will have laid the groundwork, so that voters, coming to grips with the choice before them, realize that electing Gore really is giving Clinton a third term, thereby vindicating him. That, I believe, Americans would prefer not to do. Bush can make it easier for them not to do it. ♦

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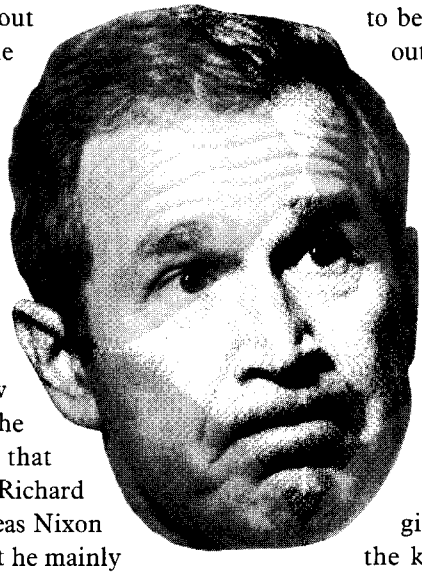
The Real Key to the Presidency

Yes, voters do want an alpha male.

By Noemie Emery

Presidents are an odd lot, sometimes too much so, ranging from the heroic to the reprehensible, and from the ridiculous to the sublime. But most, at least lately, have had one thing in common. In picking a president, voters have chosen the left and the right, the poor and the rich, the pious and the rakish, the handsome and the homely, the young and the old. But in every election since 1932, the voters have gone, without reservation, for the candidate seen as the stronger, the more decisive, the more aggressive, the more forceful man.



Franklin D. Roosevelt, the greatest political talent of the twentieth century, projected an air of such radiant vigor that most people forgot, or never knew, he was crippled. Harry Truman took the battle to Thomas E. Dewey, who refused to engage him. Adlai E. Stevenson's scholarly diffidence saw him lose twice to Dwight Eisenhower, the man who freed Europe. Many believe that John F. Kennedy won his debates with Richard M. Nixon because he was "cute," whereas Nixon was scowly. Kennedy *was* cute, but what he mainly did was establish a psychological dominance over Nixon, who seemed cowed by and eager to please him. He was the one who set the tone of the argument, calling for "vigah" and movement against Nixon's defenses of the status quo.

Nixon was never charming or popular, and was deposed in the Watergate scandal. Yet even he was able to win two terms—one in a landslide—against men regarded, for different reasons, as weak. Hard as it now may be to remember, Jimmy Carter beat Gerald Ford in 1976 partly because *he* seemed the stronger man. Ford appeared gaffe-prone, while Carter campaigned as an ex-career naval officer, a protégé of Admiral Hyman Rickover. Four years later, Carter had been exposed as a hapless soul set on by rabbits, who could not keep peace in the world or his party. He lost to Ronald Reagan, the model cold warrior, who wasted no time in firing the illegally striking airport traffic controllers and bringing the country's defenses back up to par. With his spectacular ad of the Bear in the Forest (who would you trust to be holding the rifle?), Reagan then wiped out Walter Mondale in 1984.

Michael Dukakis was not incorrect in 1988 when he declared that the campaign was about competence and not ideology. His problem was that after saying that, he went on to run a stunningly incompetent campaign. His weaknesses on crime and defense were symbolized in the awkward photo of himself in a tank, and his lame answer to a debate question about the hypothetical rape and murder of his wife. He launched into a long discussion of root causes and his anti-drug program, giving the impression he would sentence the killer to soft time and counseling. The message sent—reinforced by the unsupervised furlough he had granted to Willie Horton, the murderer set free to maim and pillage again—was that Dukakis would not defend anything: not his wife, not your wife, not even the country. Bill Clinton, who was never personally popular beyond his own base, won two elections with less than 50 percent of the vote because his rivals appeared both too old and too tired. And this year, the two candidates, men of similar age and background, have seen their fortunes rise, fall, and fluctuate with the energy and leadership they have shown.

Let us revisit some critical moments to see this dynamic play out. Immediately after the primaries ended

Noemie Emery is a frequent contributor to The Weekly Standard.

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Al Gore was seen as the probable winner, while George W. Bush was viewed as having been damaged and even diminished by his primary battles. But just after this Bush began building his lead, proposing a series of policy ventures to which Gore responded with shrill, even silly, attacks. From the time of the primaries through his convention, Bush took the lead, set the agenda, dictated the terms, and made Gore come to him. His lead soared into double digits; he attacked enemy pockets of strength. This changed only with Gore's pick of Joe Lieberman—an aggressive and daring maneuver—with Gore's aggressive speech at the convention, and with Gore's aggressive conduct ever since.

Let us recall that the Democratic convention was seen as a failure while it was ongoing; and that Gore's speech was seen, by the press, as having said the wrong things. Let us suggest then that Gore's surge has had less to do with his speech or his convention than with what happened in the two weeks that followed. The parties of offense and defense changed places. No challenge came from the Bush camp to Gore's ludicrous claims as a populist. Gore took charge of the tone, the debate, the agenda. Bush came to *him*. Bush seemed defensive, dazed, even diffident. Gore's bounce was in part at least Bush's deflation, as he lost, for the moment, the leadership edge. Can he regain it? Whoever holds it in the end will win.

Always crucial in every election, the leadership issue may turn out to be more important in this year than in most. The two parties appear at absolute parity. The candidates do not scare people, or seem out of the mainstream. In some ways they are rather alike. They are the scions of political families, with the same kind of privileged background. They went to good schools, where they did not win honors. Their résumés are impressive, but not overwhelmingly so. This is an era of peace and prosperity, presided over by a Democratic administration, but also by a Republican Congress and many Republican governors. People seem to assume the good times will continue, with either party or candidate. Indeed, the public believes there is little at stake. The wild swings of opinion have stunned both parties, showing how shallowly rooted are the allegiances, how easily perceptions can change. These perceptions have mainly been about power and weakness. And they may well decide the election.

This is a year in which each campaign and candidate has achieved odd highs and lows in performance, falling into swoons at unlikely moments, and then roaring back from the dead. No one expected Gore to fade as he did in 1999, or to then knock off Bill Bradley so quickly. No one expected George W. Bush to lose New Hampshire by the margin he lost it, or then to so fiercely regroup. No one expected Bush to so dominate most of the summer, and no one expected Gore to recover.

What will happen next cannot now be guessed: It will doubtless be something that no one expects. These are two preppy princes, who may tend to coast when things look too easy, but fight back when they face the abyss. And they are fighting not just for themselves but to avenge the defeats dealt their fathers. A loss for each would be doubly appalling. Legacies seeking to justify privilege, each needs to be seen as a man.

The president is there not merely to choose among health plans but to lead when the unexpected and dangerous happens.

And voters, too, need to see them as manly. The presidency, as we know, is a job like no other. The president is the face, and the right arm, of the nation. He is the commander in chief. He must be able to stare down a rival and impose his will on others. He must be able to adapt quickly to changes and to snap back after a loss. He is not there merely to choose among health plans, but to lead when the unexpected and dangerous happens: when the news crosses his desk that the Japanese are attacking Pearl Harbor; that Soviet missiles have been spotted in Cuba; that Iraq has gone into Kuwait. This is what people sense in electing a president, and why they look for strength.

Polls say the "issues" now favor the Democrats, but the same issues also favored the Democrats when Ronald Reagan was racking up landslides. This is because there is a sizable group of voters who will choose a leader with whom they may have disagreements over a weakling with whom they do not. This is why the polls this year have tracked so exactly the candidates' levels of force and resilience. We vote in the end for the alpha male, but for reasons that know not of earth tones. The better men may not always win our elections, but the men seen as powerful do. ♦

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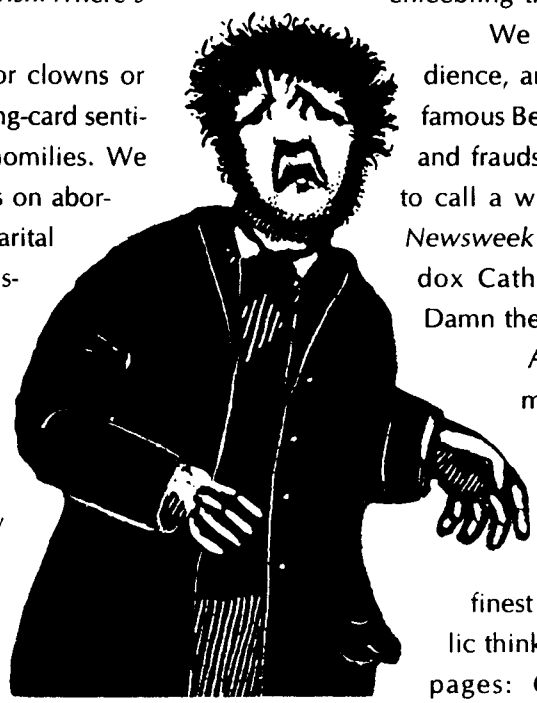
Why Are Catholics Such Wimps?

The Vatican thunders against abortion, same-sex "marriage," priestesses, assisted suicide, illicit sex, consumerism, smutty sex education, defective theology, and more. But walk into your average parish. *Where's the beef?*

All we get are *crumbs*: balloons or clowns or liturgical dancers or banners with greeting-card sentiments, but always vacuous feel-good homilies. We don't hear about the Church's teachings on abortion, euthanasia, homosexuality, pre-marital sex, pornography, birth control, the indissolubility of marriage, Hell, etc. Why not? "Too controversial," whines the cowardly pastor. Pop psychology and Political Correctness are all the go. Shack-ups and homosexual partnerships are considered morally equivalent to Holy Matrimony, for Father Fluff doesn't refer to husbands and wives as husbands and wives anymore — now he calls them "partners," just like people in immoral unions, lest those living in sin feel "marginalized" or, well, sinful. Indeed, sin and repentance are passé, prompting one to wonder why Christ bothered to get crucified.



Wimpy clerics are keeping the full Catholic message from us. We're being robbed of our history, doctrine, moral resources, and intellectual heritage. No wonder many Catholics, who don't have a clue as to what Catholicism stands for, fall for anything our decadent culture entices them with! Especially our youth!

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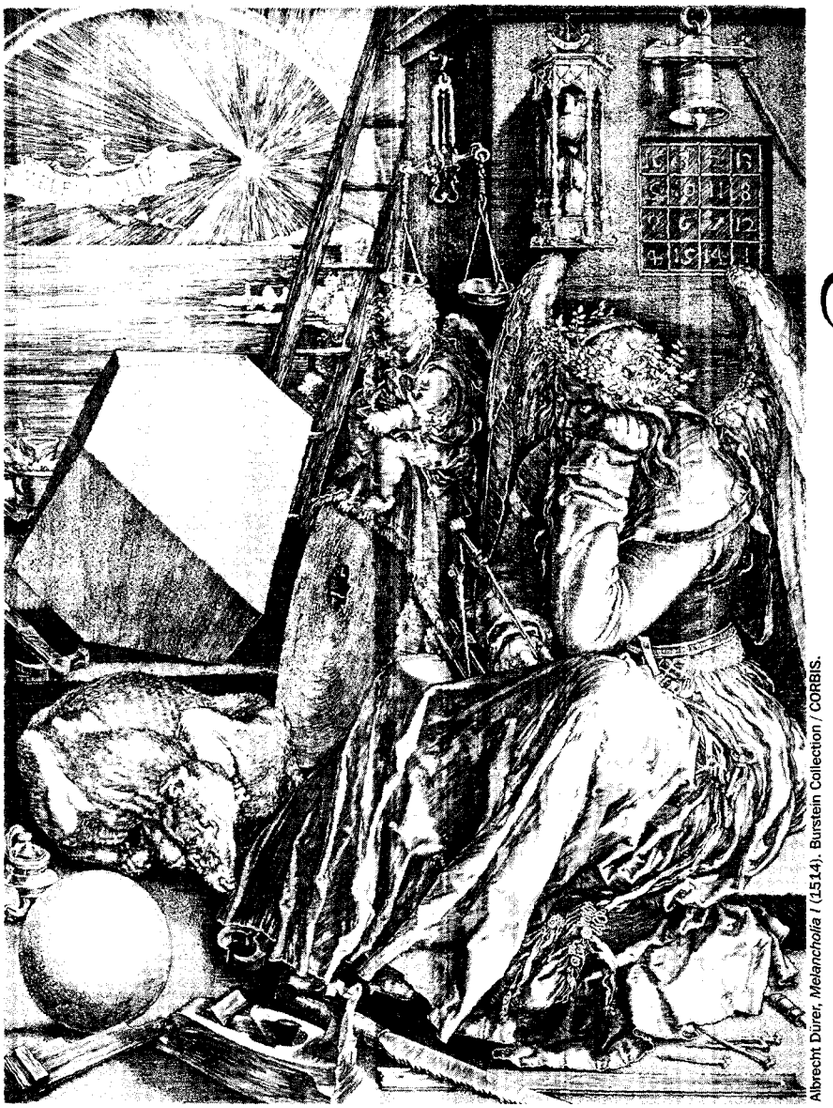
Heat and Light

David Stove's rage against bad thinking

By THOMAS S. HIBBS



Albrecht Dürer, *Melancholia I* (1514). Burstein Collection / CORBIS.

How did we get to the point where a respected philosopher of science could place Western science on a par with voodoo and argue that truth in science should be determined by democratic vote? Or that a feminist could call Newton's *Principia* a "rape manual"?

In an academic world where such assertions too often call forth neither laughter nor scorn, but serious reflection and measured response, the writings of the late Australian philosopher David Stove are not apt to find a welcome reception. Until recently, Stove was virtually unknown in American circles.

Championed of late by the *New Criterion*'s Roger Kimball and recommended by notable philosophers of science such as Stephen Stich, Stove has begun at last to get a hearing. A self-proclaimed neo-positivist—and a brilliant, truculent, cantankerous essayist—Stove attacks everything from contemporary philosophy of science and evolutionary theory to religious belief and the intellectual equality of women.

Two of his works are currently available in the United States: *Against the Idols of the Age*, a selection of Stove's writings put together by Roger Kimball, and *Anything Goes: Origins of the Cult of Scientific Irrationalism* (also available, under a different title, as *Scientific Irrationalism: Origins of a Postmodern Cult* from Transaction Press).

Against the Idols of the Age
by David Stove,
edited by Roger Kimball
Transaction, 345 pp., $39.95

Anything Goes
Origins of the Cult of Scientific Irrationalism
by David Stove
Macleay, 218 pp., $24.95

In both volumes, Stove proves a sort of pessimistic satirist, obsessed with laying bare the foibles of the human mind, but with no hope for reform of any sort. Whatever one makes of Stove's conclusions, he is eminently worth reading, bracing, lucid, and always entertaining.

By far the most persistent target of Stove's scorn is the contemporary field of philosophy of science. Stove traces the derailment of reasoning about science to the philosophical thought of Karl Popper and, especially, to Thomas Kuhn, whose *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* is among the most cited books of the twentieth century. Popper sees induction as always uncertain and feeble: Science, he insists, is not really about "verification" but "falsification." Since science is essentially a matter of constructing hypotheses and attempting to falsify them, the best it can do is to provide a list of the theories that don't work.

Kuhn's work betrays a similar skepticism about progress in science. Kuhn distinguishes between normal science, which operates within an established paradigm, and revolutionary science, which is the period during which rival paradigms vie for the allegiance of the

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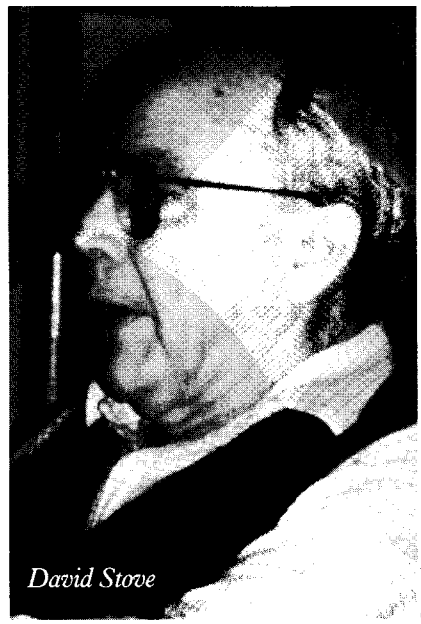
scientific community. Since the rational resolution of disagreement is possible only within an accepted paradigm that provides criteria for settling disputes, there can be no rational conclusion to a conflict between paradigms. Instead, the acceptance of a paradigm is a matter of faith, influenced by various mechanisms of propaganda. (From this, yet another philosopher of science, Paul Feyerabend, drew the natural inference that science itself is merely one paradigm, one worldview, among many, including voodoo. We are living in the jazz age in the philosophy of science, and the theme song is Cole Porter's "Anything Goes.")

Stove lists two reasons for the abandonment of the traditional, progressive, and objective conception of science. First, there was the repulsion felt toward the superficially triumphalist character of nineteenth-century Victorian science. Second, there was the displacement of the Newtonian, mechanistic science by relativity and quantum theory, which gradually eroded confidence in science: If Newton was assailable, nothing remained certain. Of course, the demise of Newton did not actually signal the end of the practice of science or a lapse into anarchy. Even Popper and Kuhn continue to use words like "knowledge," "discovery," and "explanation" in their descriptions of scientific activity. These are "success words," as Stove calls them, words that entail the achievement of truth. Philosophers of science, however, engage in a duplicitous and systematic abuse of language through the neutralization of success words. Popper, for example, uses "irrefutable" and "unfalsifiable" interchangeably, never bothering to note that while the former is a success word, the latter is not. The loss of faith in science led (just as did the earlier loss of faith in religion) to the use of "ironized" words.

One might expect philosophers of science, whose aim is to construct theories about theories, to loose their mooring. But scientific theories themselves, even theories as widely accepted as that of evolution, often rely upon false premises. Emphatically not a creationist, Stove nonetheless anticipates some of the recent criticisms of Darwin's theory. Stove acknowledges evolution, for which he thinks the fossil record provides incontrovertible evidence. Willing to accept that we have evolved, he dismisses the question of how we evolved as uninteresting.

Darwin's own answer to that "how question" had recourse to Malthus's principle concerning the exponential rate of growth of all populations. The natural tendency of all species to increase in numbers sets the stage for


David Stove

Transaction

competition for scarce resources such as food. In this contest, natural selection operates in such a way that certain species are enhanced and survive, while others are gradually eliminated.

Whatever may be the case for the rest of nature, Stove thinks natural selection does not apply to the human species; in fact, he calls it a slander on our race: The human species regularly adopts practices to limit population and repudiates practices, such as incest, that would maximize population. There is, moreover, no evidence that our species is involved in a constant clash for survival. Of course, Darwinians are nothing if not resourceful in their interpretation of cases and so each counter-example can be reinterpreted as actually providing an "optimum reproductive strategy for the species." But, Stove counters, this is precisely the problem: "No cases ever do bother" evolutionists.

The dilemma for Darwin is how to account for the manifest contradiction between what we know about human life and what the theory of evolution claims is true of all species at all times. Stove describes three possible responses: cave man, hard man, and soft man.

The cave-man response is that while we once were subject to a ruthless competition for survival, our species long ago escaped from the conditions of natural selection. Of course, this is a tacit admission that the theory is not universally true.

The hard-man response is to insist that the natural order is one of ruthless competition for survival, but that human beings have unwittingly deviated from that order. Those who hold some form of this response often promote the elimination of programs designed to assist those who are ill-suited to open competition—the most famous example being the eugenic elimination of lives unworthy to be lived. The contradiction here is between the alleged inevitability of natural selection and the practice of advocating policies to help the inevitable to reach fruition. As Stove puts it, hard men shouldn't say that unemployment relief is "deplorable," but that it's "impossible." Although it is considered indecorous to mention the point, Darwin himself proffers a eugenic proposal in the final pages of *The Descent of Man*.

The soft-man response is that held by the bulk of humanity, including most intellectuals: The soft man simply fails to notice that he's caught in any kind of inconsistency.

Faced with this range of possible responses to its dilemmas, contemporary evolutionary theory has gone from bad to worse. In a masterful essay in *Against the Idols of the Age* entitled, "Genetic Calvinism or Demons and Dawkins," Stove skewers *The Selfish Gene*. In that book, Richard Dawkins, one of the most popular popularizers of Darwinian theory, describes genes as

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"hidden, selfish, immoral" with "immense power over us." Dawkins does caution that we shouldn't take the notion of selfish genes literally, but it's not clear in what sense we should take it. Does the self-replicating tendency of genes in any way insure the original gene's survival? Do genes practice filial piety? Stove locates Dawkins's thesis in a long line of theories—religious, economic, and psychological—that deny the causal agency of "human intentions, decisions and efforts." Dawkins's "genetic puppetry" is yet another tale of "human helplessness."

According to Stove, theories of helplessness gain a hearing because the "human race is mad." But Stove is no defender of an intellectual elite. He exhibits his greatest antipathy toward the allegedly learned few. In a volume called *The Plato Cult* (three pieces from which are included among Roger Kimball's selections), Stove cites a host of philosophers, from Plato to Foucault, to illustrate the "spectacle of nightmare irrationality" that is characteristic of our intellectual heritage. The "cult of Plato," which was an integral part of the Renaissance revival, encapsulates the tendency to treat great minds with religious reverence. What we need is a "nosology" of intellectual error, a classification of the diseases that have afflicted the human mind at least since Plato.

Stove does not hope to uncover the single root of all these diseases, which are too numerous and varied even to list exhaustively. And he has no hope for the ultimate victory of reason: Irrationality will always win out, because there are simply too many ways to go wrong. The best Stove can hope is to expose individual cases of corruption where he finds them. Stove is at his entertaining and instructive best when he is deflating the pretension of one or another bloated theory—but he has, as he must, some positive views of his own, and the grounds on which he holds them are not so clear.

One might agree with Stove, for example, that the history of Western science is a success story, a lasting achievement of which is that it has taught us "how to learn." But does this render the philosophy of science "obvious and superficial"? Stove himself provides no account of how the shift from Newton to Einstein constitutes linear progress, although he insists that it does. There are serious questions here, questions with which Einstein himself wrestled. Stove's conception of scientific reasoning is so restrained and minimalist that it requires sacrificing part of what constitutes scientific inquiry. One might concur with Stove's objections to Darwin, but is it reasonable to leave things where Stove does? Should science abandon not only the question of why evolution has occurred, but also the question of how?

Stove's rationalism is extremely ascetic, by design. As his devastating account of Dawkins shows, he is hostile to theories—unfairly labeled "Calvinist"—that reduce human beings to puppets subject to some omnipotent puppeteer. But then Stove equally resists any hint of "philosophical anthropocentrism" that would seek to save human beings from the painful possibility that the universe is indifferent to their presence. And he is quick to indulge a reductionism of his own when he dismisses religious believers as Calvinists who, in his crude Freudian terms, suffer from an infantile need to be protected.

One wonders how far Stove has distanced himself from the "Calvinist" worldview he so detests. There are, in the end, striking similarities between Stove and Dawkins. Stove's austere conception of reason, his declaration of the universal madness of the human race, and his assertion of the incapacity of reason to have any positive effect even in the rare instances where it sees the truth—these are perhaps simply a different form of the same secularized Calvinism from which Dawkins himself suffers: a vision of the universe as Calvin's puppet show, but this time without Calvin's puppeteer. ♦

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Remains of Ishiguro

Kazuo Ishiguro's latest is a novel to nowhere.

BY MARGARET BOERNER

In the long run, authors' personal lives are irrelevant to the fiction they write. But one has to be struck by the novelist Kazuo Ishiguro's biography, both because it is so strange, and because it seems to dictate the subjects of his fiction. Having spent his life in worlds that were always slightly alien, Ishiguro sets his novels in places and times that seem more imagined than known, and he fills his novels with characters who hide behind their public façades an interior we can never quite reach.

When We Were Orphans
by Kazuo Ishiguro
Knopf, 320 pp., $25

So, for example, his latest novel, *When We Were Orphans*, is set in England and Shanghai during the 1930s, twenty years before Ishiguro was born. And it uses as its narrator a brilliant English detective named Christopher Banks, a parody of the leading figures in 1930s crime fiction.

The awkwardness of Christopher's cold self-sufficiency is presumably designed to teach us the lesson that a man's public persona can differ from his interior life—though that lesson is hardly a new one, and what Christopher's interior actually looks like never comes clear. Similarly, the broadly signaled unreliability of Christopher's narration is presumably supposed to reveal the partiality and unreliability of all views of the world—though here, too, the news is news we've heard before. Ishiguro always writes of a world he never completely knew, but he makes of it little more than the modernist claim that the world itself is something we can never completely know.

Margaret Boerner teaches English at Villanova University.

Ishiguro's father—an oceanographer who said he learned his English from British soldiers—was born in Shanghai, where his own father was setting up a factory. When the Japanese set off the Pacific phase of World War II, the family returned to Japan, settling in Nagasaki, where Kazuo was born in 1954. They traveled to England in 1960, when the father received a grant from the British government to study the North Sea. He joined the National Institute of Oceanography, based near Guildford, Surrey, south of London.

Ishiguro remembers promising his grandparents as a five-year-old that he would bring presents from England back to Japan when he returned in a year or so. But the family never returned and still live in Britain, on the same Guildford street where they first settled. This is particularly remarkable, because the Ishiguros never thought of themselves as having immigrated. "For the first ten years of being in Britain," says Ishiguro, "I grew up thinking of myself very much as a Japanese person visiting Britain, as did my parents. In this sense you didn't properly immigrate or leave a life behind. You just drifted off and turned your back on some things, and when you next turned round they had gone. That's very central to my experience."

The boy may not have been British, but he was manifestly not Japanese either, receiving "a straightforward southern English education" at local schools and then going on to the University of Kent to study English and philosophy. Doing some singing and guitar strumming in folk clubs as well, he became interested first in how to write songs and then in how to write stories. After his undergraduate studies, he enrolled in the creative writing Master's program tutored by Malcolm Bradbury and Angela Carter at the University of East Anglia—the only such course in the country at that time.

Ishiguro is one of the group of "ethnic" British writers that includes Salman Rushdie, Ian McEwan, and Zadie King. His first two novels, *A Pale View of Hills* (1982) and *An Artist of the Floating World* (1986), both took place in a Japan almost entirely imagined by the author (he did not revisit Japan to get background).

But Ishiguro is best known for his third novel, *The Remains of the Day* (1989), which won him the Booker Prize, Britain's equivalent of the Pulitzer. Made into a Merchant-Ivory film starring Anthony Hopkins, the novel tells the story of the loyal butler of an English nobleman who is pleased by the rise of the Nazis in the 1930s and is ready to betray his country for them. The butler tells his story in the first person, proud of his loyalty to his master and of his efficiency as a butler, while the reader realizes he is emotionally and sexually repressed.

Ishiguro's fourth novel, *The Unconsoled* (1995), takes place in an imaginary central European city. And in his new novel, *When We Were Orphans*, Ishiguro returns to pre-World War II England—once again, a world he never knew and undertakes to imagine.

These novels typically center on a narrator whose reminiscences gradually expose his emotional rigidity and self-delusion. An Ishiguro narrator is cold, pragmatic, willful, hiding behind his profession and avoiding reality—especially in the form of emotional commitment. He is quite unreliable as to the meaning of events and his own effect on others. Thus, the butler Stevens is stupidly loyal to his fascist master and blind to his master's treason in *The Remains of the Day*. The bohemian artist who narrates *A Pale View of Hills* becomes a propagandist for Japanese imperialism during the Second World War, without realizing the contradiction.

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In *When We Were Orphans*, the unreliable narrator is Christopher Banks, who is a child in Shanghai in the years before World War II until his father and mother disappear, evidently kidnapped and murdered by Chinese warlords because Christopher's mother is an effective opponent of the opium trade, from which his father's company makes its money. Christopher is sent back to England where, after school and university, he becomes a famous detective of the type seen in 1930s detective fiction, solving cases that baffle the police. He is fêted by society, but he finds himself avoiding another orphan, Sarah Hemmings, who pursues him because she is eager to marry someone famous. He adopts as his ward an orphan girl whose parents were lost at sea.

Finally—after half the book has been devoted to a colorless summary of Christopher's grown-up life in England as a famous man and to memories of life before his parents disappeared—he goes to Shanghai just before World War II, sure he can now find his mother and father. As common sense should have told him (but few in Ishiguro's world have common sense), he will not be able to rescue his parents after eighteen years.

Shanghai seems strangely unfamiliar to him. He meets a Japanese boyhood friend, now in the army, and gets caught up in the warfare between the Chinese Communists, Chiang Kai-shek's army, and the invading Japanese. When Christopher meets up with an important person from his past, one mystery does find a solution—although most of the mysteries in the novel remain mysterious. We last hear of Christopher at the end of his life in 1958, when he complacently declares that "For those like us, our fate is to face the world as orphans, chasing through long years the shadows of vanished parents."

When We Were Orphans is ostensibly a story of a lonely, frightened boy who achieves mastery by becoming a detective so good that he can rescue his own parents, doing for them what they could not do for him. And like *The Remains of the Day*, the book is a study in the character of an unreliable narrator: The reader must become a detective who ferrets out the motives behind Christopher's emotional reticence and comic-strip mission to defeat evil. This time, however, the reader is often unsure just how unreliable the narrator is and what Ishiguro's purpose is in making him unreliable.

The history of narrators is in many ways the history of the novel as an art form. The novel moves from its beginnings in the eighteenth century with the omniscience of a reliable and impersonal narrator (Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones*: "We are now, reader, arrived at the last stage of our long journey.") to a still-reliable but now personal narrator (Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations*: "As I never saw my father or my mother, . . . my first fancies regarding what they were like were unreasonably derived from the tombstones") to the personal and *un*reliable narrators of modern fiction (Henry James's *The Spoils of Poynton*, Dostoyevsky's *Notes from Underground*, William Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses*).

Kazuo Ishiguro

Knopf

Of course, there are many exceptions. The eighteenth-century novels *Pamela* and *Clarissa* by Samuel Richardson are told by personal narrators, while Emily Brontë's nineteenth-century *Wuthering Heights* contains no less than three unreliable narrators, in a nested Chinese box of narration. But until the modernist era, use of an omniscient narrator had long seemed the natural form of the novel.

Many twentieth-century authors continued to use omniscient narrators (Doris Lessing, Alice Munro) and personal, reliable ones (Flannery O'Connor, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, and William Trevor). Nevertheless, the "unreliable" narrator is the twentieth century's natural voice—the voice of the modernist author: James Joyce, Samuel Beckett, Jorge Luis Borges. And the result is that readers no longer automatically believe the narrator. We now know that the facts of the story are not necessarily what the narrator believes they are.

"Unreliable," of course, designates several different things. It can mean a narrator who is simply lying to us, as in Henry James's *The Spoils of Poynton*. It can mean a narrator (or a center of consciousness) who is lying to himself, as in the stories in James Joyce's *Dubliners*. It can mean a narrator whose point of view is so limited or eccentric that it calls upon us to question our own views, as in Franz Kafka's story "A Hunger Artist" and Albert Camus's *The Fall*. Or it can mean the narrator who is so inarticulate that we invest him with the emotion we believe he must be feeling: "He was dead. It was raining," Hemingway gives as his famous "compound causative" sentences, leaving us to imagine the narrator's feelings. All of these techniques are designed to force us to figure out how the narrator is distorting things—while calling upon us to notice the partiality and questionableness of our own ways of seeing things.

The problem with Kazuo Ishiguro's narrator in *When We Were Orphans* is not that he is unreliable, but that he is unreliable to no purpose: There's nothing behind his unreliability. Christopher Banks is merely a parody of Englishness and the clever detectives of 1930s popular fiction. Why should we pity him for his character flaws or admire him for the light he throws on our own lives?

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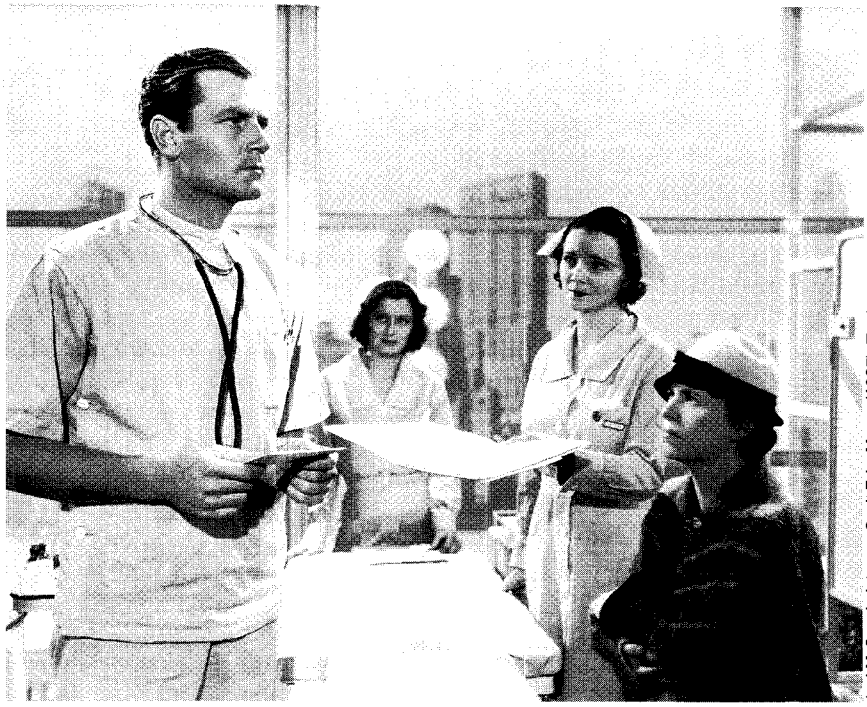
The story is plot-driven, rather than character-driven, but very few details are given. We are never told what the cases are that Christopher solves, except that they often involve murder. We find that others see him as a "miserable loner," but what is behind the layers of etiquette by which he relates to other people seems merely banal self-involvement. The detective Christopher in *When We Were Orphans* is as dull and uninteresting as the butler Stevens in *The Remains of the Day*.

The worst case to be made against Ishiguro is that his characters are one-dimensional, comic-strip types who voice only feelings conventionally appropriate for fiction set in their time. Ishiguro's prose is certainly wooden, flat, imageless, stale, and devoted to clichés. His scenes are colorless and rudimentary. His plots are simplistic and unbelievable. One *admiring* critic wrote that Ishiguro's "single insight into the human condition is that people need love but continually spoil their chances of getting it, a piece of wisdom slightly below the level of Dr. Joyce Brothers," adding that he "has acquired a reputation as a penetrating psychological realist and a luminous stylist [that] is entirely undeserved."

But what *When We Were Orphans* actually does show, with neat efficiency, is that the unreliable narrator is dead, ossified as a modernist icon. That is, now that all narrators are deemed unreliable (including the omniscient narrator of a novel like *Tom Jones*), the unreliable narrator is no longer anyone special. Why should we care about him more than the other figures in the book? Christopher Banks does not conceal a more interesting character, throw light on our own characters, or view reality in a fresh way.

In fact, Christopher is so banally modernist he sets one's teeth on edge. All his emotions are mere social constructions. And, of course, that seems to be the point. Other readers may be fascinated by a novel that demonstrates the social construction of character by presenting all people as papier-mâché figures. But this reader was exasperated. ♦



Joel McCrea in *Internes Can't Take Money* (1937). The Everett Collection.

What's Up, Doc?

A history of how Hollywood operates on doctors.

BY PETER E. DANS

Myth is central to human existence: History may tell us what we have been, but myths tell us what we could have been and might still be—as well as what others want us to be. Over the last hundred years, the most influential mythmakers have been moviemakers, reinforcing old stereotypes and creating new ones. And among the most commonly mythologized characters have been doctors—whom Hollywood has sometimes loved and sometimes hated.

From the 1930s through the 1960s, doctors were almost invariably portrayed as good guys both literally and figuratively. One researcher estimated that physicians appeared in half the eight hundred films made in 1949 and 1950 and that in only twenty-five was a doctor allowed to be a bad character. During the past three decades, as institutions and those who wielded authority came to be perceived more harshly, doctors were portrayed more typically as greedy, arrogant, and villainous—not just as individuals but even in their professional lives. Fortunately for doctors, the pendulum may be swinging back.

The durability of the clichés in early Hollywood films—such as the doctor shouting, "Boil the water," when a woman is about to have a baby—is astonishing. It's from those early films that you have pictures in your mind of the old head mirrors, interns reciting the Hippocratic oath, and doctors lighting up a cigarette whenever there's a break in the action.

It's from those films that you know all the types: the Kindly Impoverished Country Doctor (who is always pitted against the Specialist with his newfangled technology), the Rich and Mighty Surgeon (who must be taught a lesson in caring for the poor and needy), the Driven Scientist (who is searching for the "Great Cure"), and the Disillusioned Dropout (who is drawn back to the practice of medicine by a woman's illness).

Of course, criticism of doctors is as old as history. It achieved the status of art form in the eighteenth century, when Voltaire acidly wrote: "Doctors are men who prescribe medicine of

Peter E. Dans is associate professor of medicine and health policy and management at the Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions. This essay is adapted from his new book Doctors in the Movies: Boil the Water and Just Say Aah *(Medi-Ed Press).*

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which they know little to cure diseases of which they know less in human beings of which they know nothing." The nineteenth century caricaturists Rowlandson and Cruikshank portrayed physicians as pompous, greedy quacks who hid their ignorance under a veneer of Latin phrases. Of all the lay indictments of the profession, George Bernard Shaw's play *The Doctor's Dilemma*, written in 1906, remains the severest, accusing doctors of profiting from the misfortunes of others.

Critics haven't been lacking within the profession. The author Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr., a physician at Harvard Medical School, wrote that after excluding wine, opium, and a few other drugs derived from nature, "if the whole *materia medica* were sunk to the bottom of the sea, it would be all the better for mankind and all the worse for the fishes." The noted physician-writer Lewis Thomas captured the frustration of caring doctors during the 1920s in his reminiscences about accompanying his father on house calls: "What troubled him most all through his professional life was that there were so many people needing help, and so little that he could do for any of them. It was necessary for him to be available, and to make all those calls at their homes, but I was not to have the idea that he could do anything much to change the course of their illnesses."

But much of the criticism fell silent during a period that the historian John Burnham has called the "Golden Age of Medicine," when doctors attained an "admiration for their work that was unprecedented in any age." Public opinion polls from the 1930s through the 1950s consistently ranked physicians among the most highly admired individuals, comparable to or better than Supreme Court justices. This era of good feeling is captured in the doctors shown in Norman Rockwell's *Saturday Evening Post* covers, the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company's pamphlets on "Health Heroes," and a series of prints entitled "Great Moments in Medicine" commissioned in the 1950s by Parke-Davis Pharmaceuticals for display in doctors' offices.

This tendency was in large part due to a remarkable string of scientific breakthroughs. Anesthesia and antisepsis made once-fatal surgeries, like appendectomies and Caesarean sections, routine. The production of antitoxins, antisera, and vaccines (a consuming passion for dedicated researchers in 1930s movies) led to control of such major killers as diphtheria, rabies, and tetanus. Ehrlich's discovery of Salvarsan for syphilis in 1908 was followed by the introduction of sulfa drugs in the 1930s, penicillin in the 1940s, and other antibiotics in the 1950s, which enabled the conquest of the pneumonia, meningitis, strep throat, and ear infections that had claimed the lives of many children or had left them ravaged by rheumatic fever, mastoiditis, or permanent retardation.

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Jean Hersholt's bedside manner in The Country Doctor *(1936).*

Banting and Best's discovery of insulin in 1921 saved many diabetic patients. Otherwise healthy women who suffered from anemia could be helped by iron and vitamin B12. The ability to transfuse blood, plasma, and blood components saved many who would have died of hemorrhage or blood disorders and enabled the development of coronary-bypass surgery. Hench's discovery of ACTH in 1948 and the development of steroid drugs helped patients with asthma and allergic conditions and especially those with Addison's disease, a deficiency of the adrenal glands that affected John F. Kennedy. Salk's and Sabin's vaccines liberated parents from fear of polio.

The birth of the "talkies" coincided with this era of good feeling. Not surprisingly, despite the presence of an occasional villainous doctor in films such as 1942's *Kings Row*, the image that predominated in the American psyche was that of the earnest Doctor Kildare.

Most people familiar with the Kildare films remember Lew Ayres in the role; however, the first in the series was Paramount's delightfully titled *Internes Can't Take Money* (1937). Starring Joel McCrea and Barbara Stanwyck, this film in the gangster/doctor genre showed ordinary people feeling sorry for doctors who spent years of arduous training working for very low wages. When the rights to Max Brand's series of stories about Kildare reverted to MGM, Ayres assumed the role and Lionel Barrymore created the character of Dr. Gillespie, the crusty curmudgeon with a heart of gold. During the fourteen films that followed, the exploits of a wonderful ensemble cast served as the visual equivalent of a radio soap opera. (In the days before television, these films also introduced medical advances to the public: In 1940's *Dr. Kildare's Crisis*, for example, Kildare and Gillespie demonstrate the use of the fluoroscope.)

Doctors were fortunate to have Jean Hersholt as their other predominant

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movie image, a man whose personal life was so exemplary that his name graces the Motion Picture Academy's humanitarian award given annually on Oscar night. Hersholt played the doctor who delivered the Dionne quintuplets in *The Country Doctor* (1936). Later, he was the kindly Doctor Christian, who worked tirelessly for his patients and often received only bartered tomatoes in return. Kildare's and Christian's names were in the titles of their films, and they were easily transposed to the new medium of television where they were joined by such sympathetic figures as Marcus Welby and Ben Casey.

Early films also showed the dynamic tension between the need to help individual patients and the need to do research to find the cures that could help thousands. In *Arrowsmith* (1931), a doctor played by Ronald Colman forsakes his practice in a small South Dakota town to join a research clinic patterned on the Rockefeller Institute. Despite the fact that Arrowsmith is a monomaniac who is not considerate to his wife and hardly a paragon, the film was said to have inspired many to choose medicine as a profession. Other movie doctors who leave active practice for research are played by Errol Flynn in *The Green Light* (1937) and George Brent in *Dark Victory* (1939).

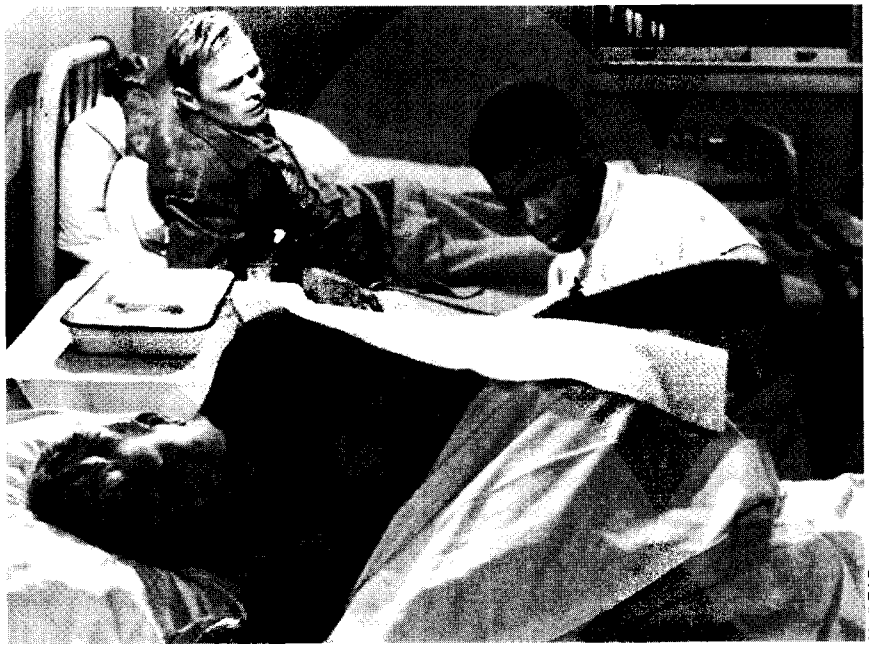
The grittier films of the 1950s and early 1960s—*The Young Doctors* (1961) is a typical example—were more ambivalent, though still largely complimentary. *People Will Talk* (1951) dealt with the attempt to disbar a doctor who practiced holistic medicine. *Lost Boundaries* (1949), with Mel Ferrer, dealt with discrimination in obtaining residency positions and the phenomenon of "passing for white." *No Way Out* (1950), with Sidney Poitier and Richard Widmark, remains one of those most powerful exposés of racism in film. *Not As A Stranger* (1955) touched on quotas for admission of applicants to medical school at a time when Jews, blacks, women, and Catholics were systematically discriminated against.

The films from the later 1960s and on to the 1990s were made during medicine's fall from grace, which was due in large part to its successes. Health status improved greatly, not just for the affluent, but with the advent of Medicaid and Medicare, for the poor and elderly as well. Fewer families had children with birth defects or the residua of polio. As acute life-threatening diseases declined, they were replaced by chronic diseases less amenable to miracle drugs.

The bond between patients and their physicians weakened as doctors no longer made house calls or saw patients in their home offices. House calls, which constituted 40 percent of all patient/physician encounters in 1930 fell to 10 percent in 1950 and to 0.6 percent in 1980. By contrast, hospitals, which had been avoided as pesthouses for the sick poor, became increasingly important. At mid-century, few counties had hospitals, and movies like *Meet Dr. Christian* (1939) showed doctors fighting the establishment to get them built. Enactment of the Hill-Burton Act in 1946, however, subsidized a hospital building boom that radically changed the look and content of American medical care.

Spectacular health care advances did continue, particularly in the treatment of once-fatal leukemias and lymphomas. But most of the new developments after 1960 were what Lewis Thomas called "halfway technologies": cardiopulmonary resuscitation, artificial respiration, kidney dialysis, and long-term intravenous feeding, that saved lives but did not cure the underlying condition. The increasing use of these technologies to prolong the life of the terminally ill created the kind of backlash that Sidney Lumet illustrated in his angry 1997 film *Critical Care*, where unscrupulous doctors keep insured terminally ill patients alive on numerous life supports to run up exorbitant bills.

The Everett Collection



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[illegible] *Opposite: Clark Gable in* Men in White *(1934) and Sidney Poitier in* No Way Out *(1950).*

[illegible] ation also [illegible] ne when some [illegible] order to harve[illegible] porate criteria [illegible] st sharply with [illegible] doctor [illegible] use of a mirror held up to the person's mouth to see if it became fogged, or the simple checking of pulse and respiration (as Lew Ayres does in the 1938 *Young Dr. Kildare*).

The accumulated social concerns about the new technology are reflected in such films as *Coma* (1978) and *Extreme Measures* (1996), in which doctors and scientists exploit the unwary for scientific fame or profit.

Where doctors remain the principals, they are more likely to be arrogant egomaniacs, as in *Malice* (1993) in which the surgeon played by Alec Baldwin says, "You ask if I have a God complex? Let me tell you something: I am God." But the alternative may be worse. As esteem for doctors diminished, their names began to disappear: *Dr. Kildare* replaced by institutional names. On television, we saw *M*A*S*H*, *St. Elsewhere*, *Northern Exposure*, *ER*, and *Chicago Hope*, where the doctors are ensemble players and romances among the staff seem more important than what's going on in the lives of the patients they serve.

This was a reaction to the influx of the large sums that transformed medical care from a cottage industry to one in which serious money could be made. No longer could the profession's ethos be set by a Hippocrates, a Sir William Osler, or the distinguished institutions that dominated it until the 1950s. You could see the change coming in the 1960s transformation of "medical insurance" to "health insurance." This rather subtle shift in terminology signaled the existence of an open-ended right to health care and the idea that health itself could be insured. One result was that medical care, after decades of steeply rising costs, is now in the midst of turbulent market-driven cost-cutting under the reigning philosophy of "managed care."

The effects were forecast in the prescient and still powerful 1971 film, *The Hospital*, in which one can see the shortage of skilled nurses and the revolving-door hospital admissions (which one commentator called "strangers caring for strangers") where patients must be processed quickly to satisfy insurance payers. The cutting of payments for physicians to spend time with people in their offices, the over-reliance on technology, and the de-emphasis of medical education and research are also visible.

It will probably take another decade before the smoke clears and the "health care system" is re-humanized. Still, doctors' images in movies may have begun to recover: The 1997 *As Good As It Gets*, whose stars won best actor and best actress Oscars, is highly critical of managed care and insurance companies, but presents—in the professional, gray-haired doctor who treats the asthmatic child—as positive an image of doctoring as any in the Golden Age.

Of course, Hollywood's doctor myth back in the Golden Age was not an unmixed blessing. It set impossible expectations among patients and often led to burnout and disillusionment for the doctors who tried to live up to them.

Nonetheless, I find a part of me longing for the old-fashioned, more uplifting portrayals of doctors. Despite an activist Federal Trade Commission's success in the 1970s in gaining purview over medicine, doctoring is not a trade. Nor is it, as it is sometimes alleged to be, a utility or a commodity. In ancient times, doctors were considered to be practitioners of a noble profession and a calling—which is exactly what the Hollywood myth of the Doctor during the Golden Age called upon us doctors to be. It may not have been what we really were, but it told us what people wanted us to be—what we could have been and might still be. ♦

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September 11, 2000

CONFIDENTIAL

Memo To: W

From: Karl

Subject: Raising Our Negatives

The Problem. We made a bad mistake waiting so long to rebut news reports that you are charming, moderate, and passably competent. We left Gore free to position himself as the clueless robot in the race. Sure enough, Steeper's open-endeds show big chunks of our top-priority demographic—dumb people—suddenly deserting us in favor of "the other guy . . . the conceited one who kissed his wife."

The Solution. WE NEED TO GET THE DUMB VOTERS BACK. And we have a plan. At our senior staff toga party September 3, I described and you approved a three-part strategy to instantly generate—and sustain—some of the worst press coverage in the history of American politics. We have already taken valuable preliminary steps in this direction. But as Dick Cheney points out, now we need to push ahead "big time."

Theme One: You are Personally Unstable and a Hypocrite. It's clear we were too subtle with the bogus "wedding video" we arranged for Drudge to get. Simply put: You didn't look drunk enough. We've scheduled another shoot for Saturday, this one depicting you absolutely wasted—at 10 a.m. in the governor's mansion!—during a conversation about nuclear weapons with Gen. Powell. Just to be on the safe side and really put it over, we've scripted a close where you brand Powell with a red-hot wire hanger, vomit uncontrollably, and then pass out—all on camera and, as Dick recommends, fully miked. Your old man knows a special trick for making yourself throw up on cue. The other stuff, needless to say, is old hat. Likely placement for this clip: by mail to Salon magazine (from "a concerned citizen").

Theme Two: You are an Empty Suit. We had hoped it would look like a Hail Mary play, of course, but for some reason everyone has interpreted your debate proposal—Tim Russert instead of some airhead "town hall" facilitator—as a sign that you are afraid of your opponent. I caution you: This is only a minor side benefit. Stay on message. Being thought a coward is fine, but our real goal remains making people think that, like them, you're a dope. Which means, when it finally does come time to debate Gore, you're still going to have to take a serious dive. I know this will be unnatural, but I also know you can do it. We have Jack Kemp coming in to help prep you. He's the expert. Please listen to him.

Theme Three: You are Abusive and Vulgar. No question: Allbaugh's Adam Clymer idea worked like gangbusters. We couldn't have bought such criticism. Yes, a couple of our smarter reporters have asked whether we didn't stage the whole thing on purpose. But Ari's brilliant "gaffe" denial—"Bush isn't that stupid"—has suckered them off the scent. Our only worry now is that some well-meaning innocent will actually try to defend your remark. For instance: This morning Mike Gerson talked to a woman who wants to write a long article for the Atlantic about how "George W. Bush Was Right." Unfortunately, it seems there's a great deal of social science evidence that Clymer really is a major-league asshole. Similarly, Marvin Olasky has a draft op-ed he says will prove that your slur against Clymer is consistent with the Christian God's demand for truth-telling. We'll kill that, too. Remember: We want to look bad.

Sixty days left. If we screw up each one, we just might win!

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The Remarkable Prosperity of College Graduates

Robert E. Hall is the Robert and Carole McNeil Senior Fellow, Hoover Institution, and the McNeil Professor, Department of Economics, at Stanford University.

Americans have done well in the past decade, but college graduates have really cleaned up. Between 1990 and 1998 (the last year reported by the government), BA holders' earnings rose by 18 percent after adjustment for inflation. People with graduate degrees did even better: 25 percent higher earnings over the eight years, after inflation. High school graduates without college, at the same time, saw earnings increases of only 11 percent after inflation. The financial payoff to a college education and to graduate training rose to an all-time high. The benefits go to those who actually finish college and receive a BA—there has been no sharing of the bonanza by those who receive two-year AA degrees or drop out of BA programs. Because college graduates were already at the top of the earnings distribution, the widening of the education gap contributed to the general rise in economic inequality noted during the decade.

What do college graduates do that puts them on the earnings escalator? The industries that hire large fractions of college graduates are technology users. They include business and engineering services, financial institutions, and the chemical industry. All these industries have workforces that are at least 25 percent college graduates. The most college-intensive industry is securities trading, where 58 percent of all workers have graduated from college.

Industries where college graduates have little role are decidedly low tech: restaurants, hotels, mining, and basic manufacturing, including paper, steel, lumber, and food. College graduates are 7 to 15 percent of the workforces of these industries.

The 1990s were the decade when the stock market rewarded technology. Although the most famous examples of big increases in technology stock prices were for technology producers—Cisco, Microsoft, Sun Microsystems—there were also huge increases in the value of technology-using firms. **There is a striking relationship between college intensity and stock market return in the 1990s.** Low-tech firms—those with less than 15 percent college graduates in their workforces—averaged annual returns of 16 percent over the decade, not far above historical averages for the market. High-tech firms with 25 percent or more college graduates averaged a stellar 25 percent per year. A dollar invested in 1990 in low-tech industries, defined in this way, became $4.40 this year, while a dollar invested in high-tech, college-intensive industries became $9.30, more than twice as much.

Technology-using industries have been good to their workers—mostly college graduates—and good to their shareholders. Along with the technology-producing electronics and software industries, they were dynamos of the economy.

It is unlikely that investors will earn such high returns in the coming decade. The fabulous bull market for technology makers and users has already cooled off, especially for Internet companies. But the message is durable that college matters. College graduates are the architects of the new economy, and they have been amply rewarded for that role.

— Robert E. Hall

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

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